



Attempt

Logm. 48 h

A N
A T T E M P T
TO SHEW THAT THE
K N O W L E D G E
O F
G O D,
H A S,
IN ALL AGES, BEEN DERIVED
FROM
REVELATION OR TRADITION,
NOT FROM
N A T U R E.

THROUGH FAITH WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE
WORLDS WERE FRAMED BY THE WORD OF
GOD. HEB. xi. 3.

G L A S G O W:

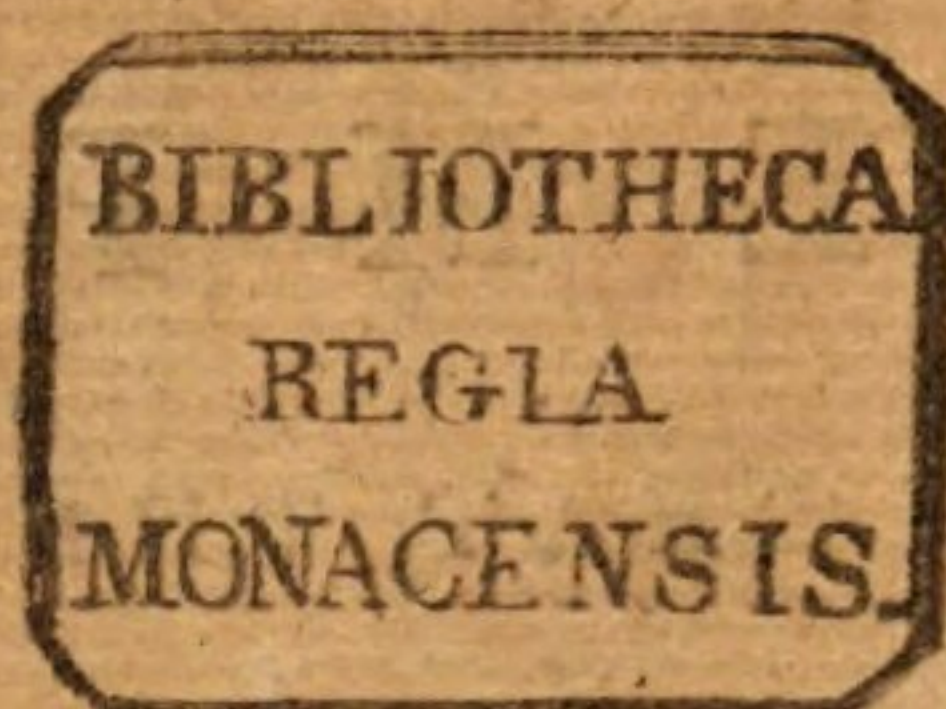
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THE
KNOWLEDGE
OF
GOD

DERIVED FROM
REVELATION OR TRADITION,
NOT FROM
NATURE.

BOOK I.

PART I. SECT. I.

THE knowledge of God is allowed by all, to be the foundation of religion, and therefore of happiness; but concerning the kinds of knowledge, and the means by which they have been attained, mankind are not entirely agreed: there is a knowledge of God, communicated by his word and Spirit, which is necessarily connected with eternal life. Said our Lord, in his prayer *, “Thou hast given him power over all
“flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as
“thou hast given him; and this is life eternal, that they
“might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ,
“whom thou hast sent: I have manifested thy name

* John xvii. 3, and 6.

“ unto the men which thou hast given me out of the
“ world.”

Taking it for granted, that this knowledge could not be attained, unless by the means now mentioned, or that the light of nature could not communicate that knowledge of God, which our Saviour says is eternal life, I do not propose here to treat directly of it.

There is a knowledge of God, which all men, in all nations, whether they had immediate access to external revelation, or not, have, in some measure, obtained. Concerning this we are to inquire; and if it shall be made appear, that, by the light of nature alone, men never did, and never could, attain to that knowledge, it will evidently follow, that, by that light, men could never have known God, so, as to obtain, by that means, eternal life.

By what means have men, in all ages, attained to this knowledge? not by innate ideas; for the opinion which long prevailed in favour of these, is now, with great reason, exploded: not by information, or instruction, say our opponents; this, in their opinion, was by no means necessary: nor by inspiration; this nobody pleads in the present case: but by the light of nature; by this, alone, it is said, men might know that there was a God; and, by this, they have actually discovered that interesting truth, that the relation between him and his works is so evident, that a man endowed with reason, and therefore able to compare things together, and to observe or feel the result of that comparison, must immediately, or after a very short process, conclude that there is a God.

Reason is, indeed, a most excellent gift; but we are apt to ascribe more to it than truth and experience will permit; to consider it as able to pervade the universe, and to discover all truths, to know and to do almost all

things; whereas a little attention will shew, that the principles with which it sets out, are very few, obvious and simple, that its progress is slow, and its sphere much more contracted than is commonly imagined: the province of reason seems to be, to compare things together, which fall within its notice, the effect of which comparison the mind naturally feels: when a man ignorant of numbers, and of their properties, is taught the meaning of the terms of this proposition, Two and two are equal to four, he then understands it, but not before, when he is informed, or considers by himself, what is meant by two and two, and four, and what, by the equality of these two first numbers with the last, his mind assents to, or feels this as a truth, that two and two are equal to four. Thus, what he ever after considers as a maxim, or first principle, undoubted, and self-evident, was not so to him at first, until he understood the terms of it.

Again, let us suppose a man created at once in the vigour of strength, with his senses entire, placed in a corner uninhabited, ignorant of the nature of food, and, at the same time, having the necessaries of life within his reach; that he finds a certain fruit, which suits his taste, and contributes to his nourishment and strength, he would afterwards, when hungry, naturally have recourse to the same tree, or to fruit similar to, or of the same kind with that which he ate before, concluding that, as formerly, it would relieve him; but concerning other kinds of food, not similar to this, he would conclude nothing, until he had made the experiment.

Let us further suppose, that a man finds a watch by the way; that he never saw a watch made, nor heard anything concerning it, nor concerning the doctrine of causes and effects; he must not only be ignorant of the use of the

watch, but having no means by which he might discover the relation between the watch and the artist who made it, he could form no conjecture concerning the cause or maker of the watch.

S E C T. II.

THE design of this work is to shew, that mankind have obtained such knowledge of God, as, in all ages, they have had, not by the light of nature in the first instance, but by external revelation, or by tradition derived from that revelation. In order to this, I shall endeavour to show, that there were such avocations in the way of mankind, left to themselves, and by supposition uninstructed, that it would be a long time before they had opportunity of inquiring concerning God; and even after they had time and leisure, that this truth, there is a God, or one God, they could not by the light of nature have discovered: then I shall endeavour to shew by what means men came to have any knowledge of God.

First, then, by reason of many avocations, it would be long before men had any opportunity of inquiring concerning God; and here we must abstract entirely from external revelation, and leave it quite out of sight. The first of the human kind, who must have been two in number at least, as many more as you please, must be supposed not to have been made in a state of infancy, but of the stature, or of the strength of men, so as to have been able to provide for their subsistence, and to have had no knowledge of any kind, except what they derived from reason, or the light of nature, or which, in my opinion, is the same, from experience and observation. The first feelings, we may suppose, they had, must have been those of hunger and thirst, which would prompt them to search

for the means of their subsistence; but by what means could they distinguish things useful, from those which were unfit for their purpose, or even pernicious? what could determine them to prefer the fruits to the trees which produced them, or to the earth upon which they might sometimes be found, or to the grass which sprung from the ground?

They could receive no instruction from those who went before them; for they were the first, and, by supposition, the only human creatures; nor could instinct have any share; our adversaries don't plead it; they depend upon reason alone; besides, what is instinct? the effect of education and habit: men, when grown up, eat and drink such and such things, because they have been taught by the example of others, and because they have been accustomed to pursue the same tract from their earliest years. Infants, from whom our first men differ in nothing but strength of body, when they are born, feel cravings; but, although they had strength, they have no knowledge to distinguish what is fit for nourishment, from what is not; they would suck any thing applied to their mouths as readily as their mothers breasts; and, therefore, without the friendly aid of others, they would infallibly perish.

Since then the first men could have had no assistance from instruction, nor from instinct, they must have depended upon experience alone; prompted by hunger and thirst, they must have applied to the first object they met with, whether earth or stones, timber or bark, or, perhaps, in imitation of the ox, to the grass of the field, from which they would reap almost as little benefit as from any of the former; if they were situated far from water and fruit, they could have no supply, till they had made trial of every thing in their way; and who can say,

but that, exhausted with hunger and thirst, and discouraged by many fruitless trials, they would have ceased the pursuit, and died in despair?

But, supposing them to have arrived at a place of waters and of fruits, and to have satisfied their appetites with these*; that is, with water, and the softer fruits; or, from those of the shell, or harder kind, they would not for a long while after the first trial, have looked for any benefit, any more than they would from the stones, which resisted their touch; if they lived in a climate subject to winter, which we may suppose they did, winter would rob them at once of subsistence, and of life.

Their food, or the greatest part of it, through the winter, till the following autumn, if indeed they could survive the winter, must have been either the milk or flesh of animals, or both, and their defence from cold, caves, the skins of beasts, and fires.

As to the milk of animals, men would see, that these creatures were of a species different from themselves, that their food, when tried, was of no use, or, in many cases, hurtful to them; and therefore, if they reasoned at all, they would conclude, that the effect of that food, or the milk of these animals, would be hurtful also; if they would not immediately, or in the time of need, have recourse to the milk, much less would they to the flesh of animals; the smell or taste of a beast sometime dead,

* Ipsa quoque immunis, rostroque intacta, nec ullis,
 Saucia vomeribus, per se dabat omnia tellus,
 Contentique cibus, nullo cogente creatis
 Arbuteos foetus, montanaque fraga legebant
 Cornaque, et in duris haerentia mora, rubetis,
 Et quae deciderant, patula Jovis arbore glandes.

OVID. Met. Lib. I.

would naturally create disgust: besides, there was nothing within them, which could have suggested the use of animal food, or disposed them to take away the life of an innocent creature; nature would, doubtless, have revolted against every thought tending this way.

Porphyry, speaking of mens offering in sacrifice, and eating the flesh of animals, observes, that they must have been first driven to the necessity of using that kind of food by famine and by wars*.

Plutarch wonders how the man, who first ate animal food, could have been induced to do it†.

The commencement of this practice, which he considers as unnatural, he ascribes to the want of the usual necessities of life, which men laboured under, occasioned by a change introduced into the constitution of the world‡.

If it be said, that lions, and other carnivorous animals, would show them the example, and point out the use of animal food, it is to be observed, that if they saw a lion killing and eating a lamb, or an ox, they would as readily see it devouring one of the human species; and if this example produced any effect, it would be abhorrence and disgust: they would be as averse from taking away the life of a sheep, as the life of a man.

In the case of an unlucky voyage, and the total want of provisions, we have heard of lots cast, in order to de-

* Δοιμοι γαρ αιτιοι, & πολεμοι, οἱ & τῇ γευσασθαι αναγκην ἐπηγαγον. *De Abſtinentia. Lib. II.*

† *De Esu Carnium.*

‡ Τι θαυμασον εἰ ζῶων ἐχρησαμεθα σαρξί; παραφυσιν; ὅτε ἰλυσ ἡσθιεῖο, & φλοιος ἐβρωθη ξύλῳ, & ἀγρωσὶν εὖρειν βλαστάνυσαν, ἢ φλοιῷ τινὰ ρίζαν εὐτυχὲς ἦν. *Idem. ibid.*

termine which of the unhappy crew should die, for the preservation of the rest: but these men knew before-hand, that flesh, in general, was good for food; and, therefore, that human flesh, though not eligible, would be preferable to irremediable famine and death: but the first men had no previous instruction nor experience; and, therefore, they never would have drawn such a conclusion, nor been led into such a practice: or, if we suppose, that famine drove them to such an expedient; that is, to devour one another, hunger, resentment, and despair, would have exterminated the human race.

Caves and leaves would have been but a poor defence against the winter cold; though the skins of animals would have been a good expedient, what could determine men, when they had no example, no antecedent knowledge of their use, to apply them for that purpose? how could they know that the skins of beasts could serve one end, and their flesh another? and that both were not designed for one purpose, that is, for food? If ever they would begin to eat the flesh of animals, they would eat the skins also; at least, they would tear and throw them aside, as things useless. But it has been shown, that they would kill no animals for food, therefore they would have no skins for clothing*.

Fire is another excellent remedy against cold; but how could men, entirely ignorant of it, and of its use, have attempted to discover, or to apply it when discovered, to

* Tum primum subiere domos, domus antra fuerunt,
Et densi frutices, et junctae cortice virgae.

OVID. Met. Lib. I.

the end they stood in need of? The invention of fire was not owing to any process of reasoning, how could it? for reasoning upon that subject, or means used in order to that discovery, go upon supposition, that men have some idea or knowledge of the thing they search for; whereas the men we speak of, being entirely ignorant, could have had no idea of fire; therefore heathen writers ascribe the discovery of fire to what is called accident, to lightning, or the friction of the branches of trees, in a storm of wind, or the striking flints against one another*: supposing this, then, to have been the case, that the branches of trees, rubbed against one another, would produce a flame, or that lightning from heaven set a wood on fire, would ignorant men, who never saw fire before, nor knew its use in any degree, learn from this sample, to apply it to any of their purposes, or conclude, from the devastation which they would see it created, that it would, in any case, be beneficial to them? Upon their approach to this destructive element, the pain or death which it would instantly occasion, would, perhaps, deter them, for ever, from making any further trials of it.

* Necdum res igni scibant tractare, nec uti
 Pellibus, et spoliis corpus vestire ferarum.
 Illud in his rebus tacitus ne fortè requiras:
 Fulmen detulit in terras mortalibus ignem
 Primitus: inde omnis flammarum diditur ardor.
 Et ramosa tamen cum ventis pulsa vacillans
 Aestuat in ramos incumbens arboris arbor,
 Exprimitur validis extritus viribus ignis.

LUCRET. Lib. V.

Ut varias usus meditando extunderet artes
 Paullatim, et sulcis frumenti quaereret herbam;
 Ut filicis venis abstrusum excuderet ignem.

VIRG. Georg. Lib. I.

S E C T. III.

THE commerce between the sexes would soon be followed with a race of children; the care of providing for the mother about the time of child birth, would naturally devolve on the father; at least, the father and mother behoved to provide for their children.

Now, if it was difficult, or rather impossible for them to provide for themselves, how could they support an additional number? Here was an augmentation to their former cares, a new avocation from every pursuit, except the preservation of themselves, and of their offspring.

Another evil they had to guard against, was the attack of wild beasts, lions, wolves, &c*. by what means could they defend themselves? by hiding themselves in caves, or by building houses or huts, or by weapons prepared for their defence? If, upon seeing one or more of their neighbours devoured by these creatures, they had retired, through fear, into the first cave, and fenced it for their safety, the cause continuing, the effect would remain; if they retired through fear, fear would confine them, as in a place besieged, till they died of hunger; or, if want would prompt them to venture abroad, they would become a prey to the hungry lion.

As to the building of huts, or houses, how could they think of doing a thing of which they had seen no example, nor heard of any instance? The same observation will hold wherever their invention was required; how could

* Sed magis illud erat curae, quòd saecula ferarum
Infestam miseris faciebant saepe quietem :
Ejectique domo fugiebant saxea tecta
Spumigeri suis adventu, validique leonis.

they suppose, that an house, of which they had no idea, would be proper for their security? how could they know what materials would answer the purpose, or how they could be put together? or, if at any time they began to build, who would provide food for them, or secure them from danger during the operation?

How could they imagine that clubs would defend them against wild beasts? or how could they make them, supposing they saw their usefulness? or, if any of these means of defence proved useless, if any man fell a sacrifice, notwithstanding these methods of security, they would readily relinquish them for the future, as entirely ineffectual.

We may easily suppose, that apples, pears, and other fruits of that kind, without some food more substantial, would have been insufficient for the support of man; accordingly, from the earliest times, we find that corns have been produced by the labour of man, and made use of as part of his food. Here again many difficulties occur, which might have prevented their knowing their usefulness, the method of propagating them, and of preparing them for food. But, supposing these difficulties removed, it cannot be easily conceived, how the ground could have been prepared without the use of iron; and the discovery of it would be as impracticable as of any of the rest. It will be said, that, in some places of the world, corns have been produced, and many arts carried to great perfection without the use of iron, viz. in Peru, when that country was discovered by the Spaniards: taking it for granted, that the whole of that history is true, and that the inhabitants concealed nothing they were possessed of from the Spanish invaders, we have reason to suppose, that the first inhabitants of that country brought with them, when they

came thither, some iron tools; but, if there were none among them who could discover iron mines, nor knew the method of working them, which may be supposed, their tools would soon wear out, and become useless: but, knowing, before-hand, the purposes to which iron tools were applied, and having now lost them, they would naturally substitute in their place, what most resembled them, or were likely to answer the same ends, sharp flints, or pebbles. In sacred history, it is said, that Zipporah, the wife of Moses, took a sharp stone, and cut off the fore-skin of her son*.

Or, if the above account of the matter will not be deemed altogether satisfactory, it will readily be allowed, that since that people, I mean the Peruvians, are represented as very quick and ingenious, since they cultivated their grounds, and built stately houses, without having discovered the use of iron, though there were mines of it in their country; if ever the use of iron could have been known without foreign instruction, many ages must have elapsed before the discovery could have been made among mankind; and therefore the methods of providing for the preservation and conveniency of man, must have been tedious, and attended with difficulties almost insuperable.

As the numbers of mankind, if they survived the hardships they met with, may be supposed, by this time, to have been increased, the impetuosity of their appetites and passions, without experience, without restraint or culture, would betray them into a conduct dangerous to others and to themselves; here was an evil, for which it would

* Exod. iv. 25.

require no small time to provide a proper remedy: the strong, from the love of ease, would, trusting to their strength, neglect, in the proper season, to provide for themselves, and, in the time of need, would take, by force, from the weak, what they had laid up: these violent measures would be followed with consequences dangerous to the whole; for, though those attached to the party of the strong, might admire, and honour, and applaud them in their success, the rest, who had suffered, or were afraid of suffering, would feel resentment, envy, and fear, and those passions would prompt them to find out means for their gratification; thus the weak, in great numbers, would become formidable to the strong in a smaller party; and, supposing the number of the weak small, by stratagem and artifice, they would soon convince the strong, that mere force would not always succeed, and that their condition, in such a state of things, was very unsafe*.

In these circumstances, then, when every man's will was his rule of conduct, no man, nor family, could be secure; therefore the love of life would naturally prompt them to search for some means for their preservation; the fittest for that purpose, were the formation of societies, the division of property, and laws framed for the security of that property, and of the lives of the owners. These institutions, we may suppose, were, at first, rude, imper-

* Et tamen e summo quasi fulmen dejicit ictos
 Invidia interdum contentim in tartara tetra:
 Ut satius multo jam sit parêre quietum,
 Quàm regere imperio res velle, et regna tenere.
 Invidia quoniam seu fulmine summa vaporant
 Plerumque, et quae sunt aliis magis edita cunque.

fect, and unfit, in many respects, for answering the ends for which they were intended: these defects behoved to be rectified, many arts discovered and improved, before men could arrive at a state of ease and affluence, the fittest one, of all others, and necessary, for study and speculation.

It will, perhaps, be said, that I have here supposed too much, things which could not exist, a society of men regularly formed and established, laws framed, and properly enforced, without any knowledge of God, without any religion; I believe as firmly as any man, that without some knowledge of God, considering the tempers of mankind, these things could not be; but, as it has been taken for granted, without any proof, that men, without revelation, could easily, by the use of their reason, discover the being of God, and every thing relating to this life, which their circumstances required, I have attempted to shew, what figure reason would make, in pointing out the necessaries and accommodations of life, what was fit for food, for raiment to themselves and families, for defence against wild beasts, and men equally wild; and found, that the cravings of their appetites, and the circumstances they were in, were such as behoved to engage their whole attention, and leave them no leisure for speculation: and if there is any error hitherto, it is probably in ascribing too much to reason; for, if we attentively consider the difficulties they had to encounter, and the dangers to which their lives were exposed, it will, perhaps, appear impossible that any of the human kind could have survived.

But, in order to see the conclusion of this matter, I have supposed, that they surmounted all these difficulties, and arrived at a state proper for contemplation;

and now, that they are supposed to have time to look around them, and to survey the works of nature, I shall endeavour to show, that they would not inquire concerning the being of God, nor be able to discover if there was a God.

S E C T. IV.

I SHALL, by the way, impartially consider certain arguments, upon which both the friends and enemies of revelation lay great stress, as demonstrative of the being of God: and let it be noticed, that these arguments were not originally deduced from reason, but from another source: the friends of religion, convinced that there is a God, and that all things around us are his works, by the information concerning them which they have received, may, perhaps, be commended for their endeavours to shew, that this information is agreeable to reason; but if these attempts, to prove the being of God, by arguments supposed to be deduced merely from the light of nature, should proceed from a desire to trust in these arguments, and not in the revelation which God hath given of himself, and of his will, the only solid ground on which the mind can rest, they are certainly to be condemned as pernicious. And, lest the reader should be alarmed with what follows, and tempted, from a superficial view, to suspect the uprightness of my intentions, and the good tendency of what he reads, I must entreat him seriously to consider, if he has read a book which he believes to be the word of God, which tells him, that there is a God, and that this world, and all creatures in the universe, are his; whether his understanding would not be more convinced, and his heart more satisfied, pleased, and solaced, than by all the argumentations of men,

who have affected to overlook revelation, from that day, when the devil and our mother Eve reasoned together, down to the present time?

Here follow the arguments, and the observations on, or the examination of them.

Arg. 1. The agreement, the harmony, and order visible in the creation, show unity of design, and that unity of design points out one author of the whole, or ONE God.

Obs. Can it be demonstrated, from the light of nature, or shewn, in any measure, to the satisfaction of a rational mind, that, in immense space, there are no more worlds or systems besides this which we see? and, if there are others, which may be the case for ought we know, can it be proved, by reason, that they have all one author? In two ships there is great harmony or agreement in the parts, and a striking resemblance to one another, at the same time, he would be no great adept in reasoning, who would infer, that James and John, who planned and built the one, were the same persons with Peter and Thomas, who built the other: but, supposing there is but one system of things, the unity of design visible in the several parts cannot lead us to conclude, with any degree of certainty, that there is but one CAUSE of the whole: for why might not many intelligent causes, as far as reason can discover, agree in producing so glorious a fabric? Many architects may agree in planning an house or city, and as many workmen in building it; and yet from the agreement of the parts, and the unity of design discernible in them, it would not follow, that that work was the effect of one cause, any more than that ten or ten hundred men are one man.

Arg. 2. There cannot be an infinite series of causes and

effects; this world, and all things in it, are an effect, the last, viz. of the chain; therefore, by ascending through the superior links, as many in number as you please, we must, at length, arrive at the first cause, upon which all the rest depend, existing necessarily of itself, without any antecedent cause.

Obf. As you cannot say that you are self-taught, can you point any one man since the world was made, who, by the use of reason alone, discovered that this world is an effect? If this cannot be proved by reason, all your arguments, concerning your chain, fall to the ground.

Can your reason, which is capable of so much, determine what degree of power was requisite for the creation of the world? If it cannot, can you pronounce that the first cause was the Creator of the world? or another cause inferior, and removed ten thousand degrees from it, or indeed any cause at all?

But, let us suppose a chain, consisting of links indefinite in number, where can reason stop? and when can it say, I HAVE found it? If it cannot prove, that the cause of the world is the first cause, when can it, with certainty, affirm of any of the superior ones, that it is the first? And though reason, exhausted with its flight, should, at length, discover the first cause, at the end of a chain almost infinite, considering the immense distance, it would be much the same thing to man, as if there was no such cause; at least, the knowledge of it would have but little influence, either to direct his conduct, or comfort his heart.

Or, can it be determined by reason that there is one chain only of causes and effects, and not twenty, having each, at the head of it, an independent cause, and all of

these causes, by agreement, concerned in the formation and government of the world?

Again, let us consider the events which happen to men, and the difference of their dispositions; reason, of itself, can never shew, to the satisfaction of any mind, that all these proceed from one cause: if one man is prosperous, numbers are overwhelmed with adversity; if one is, in any measure, happy, severals are as much afflicted, as they can be, with external evils; and, as reason can suggest no remedy against these evils, they who feel them must be wretched.

If one man is endowed with an amiable and beneficent temper, how great is the number, who, by covetousness, lust, envy, malice, and revenge, are disposed to do mischief? And every man's experience may tell him, that, if he has in him any appearance of a good principle, he has an undoubted evidence of a bad one also. Now, if you will reason, in the present case, from effects to causes, consider what must be the unavoidable consequences; if a man, by the use of reason, concludes, that the good, which appears in the world, must have a cause, he must also conclude, that the evil which is diametrically opposite to it, must have a cause of a very different kind.

Need I tell you, that some of high repute, such as Plutarch among the Greeks, the Persian Magi, through many ages in the East, the Gnostics and Manichaeans, in the first ages of Christianity, all held, in some sense, two principles, a good and an evil.

How came they to embrace such notions? By relinquishing the evidence they had by information, which was calculated, at once, to humble and to satisfy the mind; and by attempting, vainly and unnaturally, to discover, by reason alone, what reason could never com-

prehend: and let the man be shown, who, depending entirely upon the powers and light of nature, can reason on these subjects better than they did.

Arg. 3. If there are, by supposition, two Gods, the one good, and the other evil; as the perfections of both must be infinite, the infinite power of the one, being opposite to the infinite power of the other, they must, like two contrary forces, destroy one another; and thus there would be no God at all, which is contrary to fact. Now, if we suppose, that there are two good beings; as infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, are the same, not things different from infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the perfections of these two supposed beings are the same; therefore the beings to which these attributes belong, are no more two, but one; for the sameness, if I may be allowed the word, of the attributes, shows the sameness or identity of the beings, that is, they are one; therefore there is one God, infinitely powerful, wise, and good.

Obs. But, to a mind solicitous to discover the truth, or a foundation on which it might safely rely, can these metaphysical arguments afford the satisfaction required? Will a man, in his senses, consider two intelligent beings, viz. a good and a bad, as two inanimate bodies, impelled against one another, by blind force, to their mutual destruction? would he not rather infer, that the desire of self-preservation would dispose them to yield, each of them, somewhat of his right, if we may so speak, that they might enjoy something in common? and would not the mixture of good and evil, discernible in the natural and moral world, afford some ground, as far as reason can discover, for such a conclusion? will reason convince him, without leaving any doubt, that two or more beings cannot have the same perfections, that is, perfecti-

ons of the same nature, and in the same degree? From these observations it is evident, that that great truth, namely, that there is only ONE GOD, was never evinced by reason unassisted.

Now, though I should grant, for which indeed there is not the least necessity, that, by the assistance of reason, it might be shown, that there are gods, or more than one, it would be almost the same thing to mankind, as if there was none; for how could they know to which of them they were indebted, and to which they should be grateful? which of them they should serve? to which they should apply, with hope, in the time of need? and in whose favour they must be happy, if they are at any time to enjoy happiness?

But there are men, who, if you allow that reason can shew there are Gods, ask no more, because they suppose, that, by repeated trials, by experiments, and flight-of-hand, they can bring out ONE God, as the Israelites did the golden calf; how groundless that supposition is, we have already seen. Others there are, who give themselves no concern, whether there be many Gods, or none at all, providing you allow them to exclaim, without contradiction, THAT THERE IS ONE GOD, all nature proclaims, and to boast of reason, in order to discredit revelation.

S E C T. V.

THEREFORE I shall endeavour to shew, that mankind, if left to themselves, or to the direction of reason, without any aid from revelation, would never have inquired concerning God, nor been able to discover if there was a God.

The bulk of mankind, in every age, are obliged, in

some shape or other, to labour, in order to answer the demands of nature, which are frequent and importunate; or if some, by their industry or good fortune, or the injustice or frugality of their fore-fathers, have obtained a competency, they do not rest satisfied; their aim, now, is after higher degrees of wealth, in order to afford them an easy retreat in old age, or to aggrandize their families, or to gratify, what is insatiable, the love of money.

As to those of independent fortunes, and high life, if they have few real wants, they are distressed with imaginary ones; ambition, rivalry, pride, often disappointed, the love of ease which they never enjoy, and of pleasure which can never be gratified, for the most part, possess their minds: thus, pursuits of different kinds, relating to the body, and this world, engross the hearts of the greatest number of every rank; to these their views are directed; beyond these they seldom aspire: things serious, which require attention, or inquiry, they consider as foreign, uninteresting, and impertinent.

From this, among other causes, we may account for the general inattention of men to their most important concerns; in the gospel, we are blessed with a discovery of the most interesting truths; these truths, great numbers of every rank in the world have daily opportunity to read, and meditate on; these truths are publicly inculcated every seventh day, and sometimes oftener; and yet how little attention do the greatest number give in the very time of hearing? and how can it be supposed, that they will meditate on them, through the week, with the seriousness which they deserve?

They daily read, or may read, or hear of God, of his providence, of a future state, of the redemption by Christ, of the happiness of heaven, and of the miseries of hell,

but because their hearts are previously engaged, by the love of other things, and because they are daily accustomed to hear the gospel, habits, which, in other cases, confirms attention to the truths proposed, and makes the perception of them easy, in the present case, wears off their impression, or, at least, blunts the edge of attention. Men are often informed, that the heavens, and the glorious bodies which move in them, are the workmanship of God, designed, besides other purposes, to shew to man his majesty and his power; and yet, because these objects grow familiar to them, unless, in order to learn by them, time of the day or night, they seldom look at them, much less do they contemplate, by their means, the great God, who made them.—“* The minds
 “of men being engaged in a constant hurry, and accustomed to the objects which the eyes behold, neither admire them, nor inquire into the reasons of these things
 “which they always see.”

It has been shewn, that mankind, left to themselves, by reason of necessary avocations, would, for a long while, have had no opportunity of searching for God, supposing the discovery of him, by the light of nature, possible: therefore, having lived long without the knowledge of God, habit would rivet, or confirm them in the neglect of it; having been accustomed, for many years, to see the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, while their attention, in the mean time, was necessarily engaged in other pursuits, these objects would naturally cease to impress, and be accounted as things entirely common*: men

* *Affiduitate quotidiana, et consuetudine oculorum assuescunt animi, neque admirantur, neque requirunt rationes earum rerum, quas semper vident.*—

CICERO. *Tuscul. Quaest.* p. 139. Edit. Glas.

would receive, by their means, no information concerning God, supposing they had been fitted, originally, to administer it; for if men, in modern times, who daily hear of God, and his works, continue so ignorant, and pay so little regard to these truths, how can it be supposed, that men, who had not so singular an advantage, and much greater avocations from inquiry than we have, could have discovered any of these truths by the dint of reason, or merely by the light of nature?

Again, we may, perhaps, be allowed to consider the following proposition, as a maxim, because, after a little meditation, it becomes self-evident, and carries conviction with it, *Ignoti nulla cupido*; that is, what a man is entirely ignorant of, he can have no inclination to know, nor any desire to enjoy: whatever a man pursues, of that, he must be supposed, in the nature of the thing, to have some previous knowledge; if he searches for gold, or silver, or iron, or for the truth of a mathematical proposition; if, in order to the advancement of his knowledge, or the increase of his wealth, he visits foreign countries; he must, in all these, and in every other case, where he is employed in searching, have some knowledge, however faint, of the objects of his pursuit, which prompts him to inquire; without this, where would be his motive to set out, or to make any trial? without this, like a body without a mover, he would remain for ever inactive. Now, as man, by supposition, had no previous knowledge of God, before he set out in his inquiry concerning him, what could determine him to inquire? how could he begin to search for the existence of a being of which he had not even the shadow of knowledge? It will, no doubt, be objected to this kind of reasoning, that, if this account was just, no discoveries of any kind could ever have been made,

whereas the contrary is indisputably evident. Many things, of great importance, have been discovered, as it were by accident; the magnifying power of glasse, the virtue of the load-stone, iron, probably, and other metals; and, after the first discovery was thus made, the use of them was observed, and came to light by degrees. In other instances, from one or more truths discovered, men have been naturally led to the discovery of others, of which, when they set out, they had no idea, viz. in the case of arithmetic and geometry. Now, what should hinder men, when they had leisure for speculation, either immediately from the view of the creation, or after a little acquaintance with the doctrine of causes and effects, to see, that the works of creation were an effect, and, therefore, that they had a cause, and, therefore, that there is a God, supposing they had no previous notion of his existence?

I answer, by readily acknowledging, that the most useful things in human life, and, perhaps, the first principles of almost every science, were discovered, partly, by means of revelation, or by what is commonly called accident; and this, by the bye, is no small proof of the ignorance and weakness of the human mind; we are apt to wonder at the blindness of men in former ages, the slowness of their progress, and the little merit they had, in the discoveries which were made; whereas, had we lived at the same time with them, we would, no doubt, have been in the same, or, perhaps, in a worse condition. These things, attentively considered, will show how limited the powers of the human mind are, how little stress is to be laid upon, or success expected from them; and that the influence of providence, under the name of accident, in discovering what seems to be easy, and within

every body's reach, is much greater than men are generally disposed, thankfully, to acknowledge. A man having found, that, by means of spectacles, he saw letters, or other objects distinctly, which otherwise he could not have so easily discerned, we may suppose, would have infallibly reasoned thus: If, by one glass, I thus see, clearly, objects which are near me, by means of two, properly placed, I must discover objects at a distance; I must see the heavenly bodies more distinctly than ever man saw them, and enjoy, on that account, a pleasure which no man has felt. But was ever any man led, by reason, into this train of reasoning? Was it by reason, that the use of telescopes was discovered, the mean of so many other discoveries? By no means. James Mebius, a Dutchman, first discovered the use of these, entirely by accident, by means of two pair of spectacles; the Great Galileo, receiving the hint from him, made large glasses, which he fixed in the pipes of organs; through these he viewed the sun, and perceived his spots*. Now, if mankind, during many ages, did not, that is, could not, by their reason, discover many things, which appear obvious and easy, how could they discern what was more latent, and further removed from their sight, that is, the being of God? or, if you will acknowledge, which you ought to do, that God discovered himself to men, independent of any inquiry, or any reasoning of theirs, on the works of nature, as in the cases already mentioned, he revealed to them many interesting, natural truths, without the intervention of their reason, the dispute is ended; and

* See Rollin on Arts and Sciences, and Flloyd's Universal Biography.

the conclusion will be, that men obtained the knowledge of God, not by reason, or the light of nature, but by external revelation in the first place.

But, if there remain any doubts with regard to this conclusion, let it be further observed, that, when the first principles of any science are discovered, or the use of any thing rare, newly invented, the highest improvements made in these, result from the principles well understood, and properly applied, the most important discoveries made in any of these branches, and the noblest purposes they are made to serve, are connected with these immediately preceding, and these again with others in the inferior links, down to the first principles; and it is to be carefully noticed, that the last, or highest discovery, is precisely of the same nature with the first, and connected with it by a natural chain; whereas God is of a nature different from every thing which men saw, or could have any knowledge of, and the connection between him and his works, by no means so visible, as that between the most difficult mathematical truth and the principle from which it results; therefore, though a man may discover the properties of a mathematical figure, it does not follow, that he could more easily, or that he could at all, have discovered the existence of God; for the one is practicable, and has been often effected, but the other, viz. the knowledge of God, from the light of nature, is impossible. It is often confidently said, that, when a man sees a plough, an house, a coat, and the like, he immediately infers, that these must have had a cause, or been made by somebody; and, therefore, that every reasonable man, who sees the works of creation, must as naturally conclude, that they have had a cause, that is, that there is a God.

This reasoning is specious, but unjust. A man, who in innumerable instances, has seen wrights, masons, taylor, &c. employed in their several arts, cannot possibly be ignorant, that these works were designed for such ends, and that they were the effects of such causes, or the works of such artificers; but let the same man, suppose him the greatest genius ever produced, find a watch or plough, &c. let him be one who never heard of, or saw these before, nor any other production of art, nor any artist employed in such works, and he must be as ignorant concerning these, their designs, their causes, and the relation between them and their causes, as the infant of a day old; he could not even form a conjecture with regard to them, for conjecture supposes some measure of knowledge; but here he has no principles which could afford him the smallest degree of it.

In the same manner, since mankind had, by supposition, no external revelation from God, nor any instruction from men, being themselves the first inquirers, or rather the first who had opportunity to inquire, since they had not seen the world made, nor had any experience relating to that fact; they could not possibly see the relation between that work and its author, they could not know that this world was the effect of any cause, that is, they could not learn, from the works of nature, that there is a God.

The only thing that I can foresee can be further urged, is, that, after men became acquainted with several of the works of art, and observed their uses, they would, by degrees, learn to pronounce concerning all works of the artificial kind, that they were the effects of human causes, or the works of men, and that, in the same manner, men, in process of time, observing the variety, the harmony,

and usefulness of the works of nature, would conclude, that they were the effects of some cause, or causes. To this, it is answered, that men, having all their life-time, been acquainted with men, and seen, in various instances, the effects of their art, might in cases where they saw not the artificers hand actually applied, distinguish art from nature, but not universally neither; for, unless they were acquainted with nature, and art, in every circumstance, which they could not possibly be, they would, in many instances, be in a mistake; but, supposing they should not, it does not follow, that they would infer, from the works of nature, that there is a God; for nature and art are totally different; nature is the great, the permanent subject of art; art is only a superficial change, or modification, superinduced upon some particular parts of nature; therefore, from the one, no conclusion can be solidly inferred with regard to the other; in the works of art, a man can see, survey, every part, and judge of the whole, and, from the work, may determine concerning the agent; but no man ever saw, or can fully comprehend, all the works of nature; these constitute an object too great, and too immense, for any man uninstructed, to form any tolerable notion of them, to think of their having been made, or so much as to guess of their having had a cause. Besides, it is to be seriously considered, that, in the case of art, men see the workman; but, in the case of nature, no man hath seen God, the author, nor can see; in the one, men see the work performed; but, as to the other, no man ever saw God creating this world, nor any other similar to it; a man may, by degrees, from the works of art, infer the cause of these works, but not in the first instance, or when he first met with a work of art; for, before he could judge properly of it, he must, in the first

place, have seen or heard something of the cause, which produced it; therefore, since man, by supposition, knew nothing of God, as Creator, before they saw his works, they could not, from these works, learn, that there was a God.

P A R T II.

S E C T I.

IN the preceding sections, it has been shown, that reason, of itself, would have been too slow, and quite insufficient for pointing out to men the means necessary for life, food, clothing, weapons for defence, and, perhaps, implements of husbandry, and, particularly, that by it, mankind could never have discovered, that there was a God, much less, the only living and true God, whom it would have been their duty and interest to have served, and their chief happiness to have enjoyed: that if men had been left entirely to the direction of their reason, or the light of nature, with regard to these things, they must have perished, or remained as ignorant as the other animals around them of the great Creator. And, now, since men have been preserved, by the discovery of means necessary for their preservation, since some, in every age, have had the knowledge of the true God, and all of them, without exception, have acknowledged some God or other; the knowledge of these things must have been derived from revelation, or from the tradition of that revelation. Accordingly we find, that this has been precisely the case.

And God said, * “Behold, I have given you every

* Gen. i. 29.

“ herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the
 “ earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree
 “ yielding feed, to you it shall be for meat.” If God, in
 wisdom, saw it fit or necessary, to discover to man, even
 in his innocent state, the things necessary for his food,
 if we consider the state of men after the fall, having their
 minds clouded, and their rational powers enfeebled, it
 will appear, that, without such a revelation, they must
 have perished.

Animal food, which reason, as has been shown, would
 not have prescribed, revelation points out as proper; per-
 haps, after the flood, it was necessary for man's subsist-
 ence: “ The fear of you, * and the dread of you, shall
 “ be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl
 “ of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and
 “ upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they
 “ delivered. Every moving thing that liveth, shall be
 “ meat for you; even, as the green herb, have I given
 “ you all things.” If, as many with no small probabi-
 lity think, this was the first time that men were allowed
 to eat flesh; if, formerly, they ate herbs and fruits by di-
 vine appointment, and now, after the flood, flesh by the
 same appointment, it will appear, perhaps, evident, that
 animal food was not only allowed, but the use of it, of
 which mankind, till then, had been ignorant, was, for the
 first time, discovered by express revelation; or if men
 ate flesh, as well as offered it in sacrifice before the flood,
 as the rite of sacrificing was of supernatural appointment,
 so must have been the eating of animal food.

* Gen. ix. 2.

With regard to clothing, “Unto Adam also and his wife, the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them*.” Whatever improvements men afterwards made in the article of clothes, either for hiding their shame, or defending them from the inclemency of the seasons, or for ornamenting their persons. Here was the first lesson, and therefore the most important, given them on that head, independent of their own invention. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it†.” As a mean of recreation and support to the man, he is commanded to dress the garden; the word, rendered to DRESS, is in ver. 5. translated to TILL the ground; to till, to dress, or cultivate the garden. Now, since the end, namely, the culture of the garden was prescribed, the means, or instruments for that purpose, must have, in some measure, been also pointed out: for how could the man have cultivated the ground, or dressed the trees, or plants, which sprung from it, unless he had been directed to the instruments proper for that end?

Society was originally formed, by the express appointment of heaven, first between the man and his wife, and, of course, between them and their children. This first society, thus formed, became a model, naturally followed by every succeeding generation. Society, we find too, was fenced by the most sacred ties, and men engaged, by the most powerful motives, to be dutiful to one another; as an evidence of this, consider the punishment inflicted upon Cain, for the murder of his brother: “Thou art cursed from the earth; when thou tillest the

* Gen. iii. 21. † ii. 15.

“ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her
 “strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in
 “the earth * :” and the overthrow of the old world by
 the flood, because their wickedness and violence, it seems,
 against one another, had waxed great, as well as their
 impiety against God: and since the penalty was so great,
 on the one hand, the advantages of dutifulness, on the
 other, must have been great in proportion.

Hence it is evident, that mankind never were without
 society, separated from one another, nor left, like wild
 beasts, to roam through the forests. We have seen the
 first institution of society, and the fence by which it was
 guarded; this became a plan, observed, in some degree,
 by succeeding ages, as far as the history of nations can in-
 form us. In process of time, larger societies were formed,
 in proportion as the numbers of mankind increased, and
 of these, the lesser societies which we have mentioned,
 were the nurseries and the examples.

That there is a God, we find, in fact, that men were
 not left to guess, or to learn by the light of nature; for
 man was no sooner made, than God revealed himself to
 him: “And God blessed them,” that is, the man and wo-
 man, “and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply,
 “and replenish the earth†; and God said, Behold, I
 “have given you every herb bearing seed‡; and the
 “Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden
 “of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it; and the Lord God
 “commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the gar-
 “den thou mayest freely eat||.” After they had eaten
 the forbidden fruit, “they heard the voice of the Lord

* Gen. iv. 11. † i. 28. ‡ ver. 29. || ii. 15.

“ God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and
 “ the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him,
 “ Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in
 “ the garden, and I was afraid*.”

As all the transactions of the period, between the creation and the flood, are not recorded, we may, perhaps, conclude concerning the particular revelations which God made of himself, that they are not all mentioned: whatever be in this, it is to be observed, that, as men at that time lived long, revelations frequently repeated, were not then so necessary, as afterwards, when man's life became more contracted.

By means of tradition, and, probably, of immediate revelation also, Enoch had such knowledge of God, that he walked with him; that is, he believed his promises, and obeyed his will, with integrity of heart; “ and he
 “ was not, for God took him †;” *i. e.* as the author to the Hebrews explains it, he “ was translated, that he should
 “ not see death, and was not found, because God had
 “ translated him ‡. And God said to Noah, The end
 “ of all flesh is come before me; make thee an ark of
 “ gopher-wood||.”

Cain heard God speaking to him, and found, by experience, what he was; that, if he was a friend to the cause of justice, he was also the avenger of wrong: this knowledge of the existence, and of the character of God, he must have communicated, in some degree or other, to his posterity; the church, or saints, who knew God, and feared him, having sometimes intercourse with the descendants of Cain, would naturally contribute to the

* Gen. iii. 8. 9. See ch. iv. † v. 24. ‡ Heb. xi. 5.
 || Gen. vi. 13, 14, to the end. See ch. vii.

maintenance of that knowledge among them, though these wicked men did not walk worthy of it, and, by degrees, corrupted those who ought to have been their reformers.

Noah is expressly said to have been a preacher of righteousness*; to whom? not to his own family only, but also to the rest of that generation, whose want of righteousness became the cause of their destruction.

From the flood to the call of Abraham, the knowledge of God was maintained by the same means as before the flood; that is, by revelation, and by tradition: “God spake unto Noah, saying,” &c. †

Whether there were revelations besides this, and others referred to, though not recorded from that period to the call of Abraham, we cannot say; if there were none, tradition from preceding revelations, we may suppose, would answer the purpose. After this, what revelations were made to Abraham, to the rest of the patriarchs, and to the Jews, their posterity, every one knows, who reads the scriptures.

S E C T. II.

AS to the rest of the world, the knowledge of God was maintained, in some degree, and propagated, partly by revelation, imparted to individuals, at various times, and in divers places, and by tradition.

Among those who were favoured with revelations, and who communicated them to the people, among whom they dwelt, may be reckoned Lot‡; not to mention the

* 2 Pet. ii. 5. † Gen. viii. 15. to the end. Ch. ix. to ver. 18. ‡ Gen. xix.

knowledge he had of God, and his devotion to him, before the angels appeared to him, for which he had this testimony, that he was a righteous man*; the message delivered to him by the angels, concerning the overthrow of Sodom, the destruction of that city, and the deliverance of him and of his family from that destruction, must have heightened his veneration, and that of his family, for the one true God; this event, and the circumstances attending it, must have alarmed and instructed that neighbourhood, and all to whom the report of it could reach; and Lot would not fail, as far as he could, to second that impression.

When Abraham went to sojourn in Gerar, Abimelech, the king of that place, took to him Sarah, Abraham's wife: † "God came to Abimelech, in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken, for she is a man's wife; therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears, and the men were fore afraid." By the intercession of Abraham, they were healed, both men and women, of the disease, which had been inflicted on them. Of a piece with this was the event, which, before this time, happened to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, on Sarah's account‡.

Here were discoveries made to princes, in different countries, which they would readily communicate to others around them, as it is expressly said Abimelech did. These reports concerning the true God, and his care of his servants, could not fail to have some effect in

* 2 Pet. ii. † Gen. xx. ‡ Gen. xii.

maintaining, among the nations, the knowledge of him; and we have reason to believe, that one design, at least, under providence, of Abraham's peregrinations, was to promote this end.

Of Job, who is supposed to have lived some where in Arabia, about, or before the time of Moses, it is observed, "that there was none like him, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;" he, and his friends, had evidently the knowledge of God, and expressed great regard to him: by what means they attained to this knowledge, or had it preserved among them, will, in some measure, be afterwards shown. The revelation which God made of himself to them, of which we read towards the end of the book of Job, and which is directly to my purpose, must have greatly influenced their minds, and the accounts of it been propagated, by their means, through great part of that country.

Joseph knew and feared God; he was sold by his brethren, and carried into Egypt; the events which happened to him, the favour shown him, and the particular revelations made to him in that country, and by him communicated to the king, and his court, the regulations which followed, in laying up provisions against the approaching famine, the preservation of the inhabitants, and the remarkable change made in the constitution of that kingdom, must have been of singular use, in teaching that people, that the God whom Joseph served, was the only true God, and that he ruleth in the kingdoms of men.

The revelation made, and the commission delivered to Moses in Midian, the message which he delivered from God to the king of Egypt, and the many miracles which he wrought, as evidences of his mission, which were seen

or felt through all Egypt; the deliverance of the Israelites, and the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea; the miraculous preservation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness, under the conduct of Moses, while they travelled through many kingdoms, and their introduction into the Land of Promise; the miraculous cure of Naaman the Syrian, by washing in Jordan, according to the direction of Elisha; that prophet's prediction of the death of the king of Syria, who had sent to him, to know from the Lord, what would be the issue of his disease*. These revelations, delivered at various times, and in different quarters of the world, far removed from one another, were all calculated to maintain among men, or to recal them to, the knowledge of the God of Israel, the true God. Of the same tendency were the message of God, by Jonah, to the populous city of Niniveh, and the effect of that message upon that people; the recovery of Nebuchadnezzar's dream by Daniel, and the interpretation of it; the deliverance of Daniel from the fiery furnace, and from the lions den; his interpretation of the hand-writing upon the wall, which none of the astrologers understood, and the rank he was promoted to, and the influence which he obtained by these means: "And
 " the king answered unto Daniel †, and said, Of a truth
 " it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of
 " kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst re-
 " veal this secret: then the king made Daniel a great
 " man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him
 " ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief
 " of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon:

* 2 Kings v. ch.

† Dan. ii. 47.

“ and Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach,
 “ Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the pro-
 “ vince of Babylon, but Daniel sat in the gate of the
 “ king. I make a decree, said the king*, that, in every
 “ dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear be-
 “ fore the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and
 “ steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not
 “ be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the
 “ end: he delivereth and rescueth; and he worketh signs
 “ and wonders in heaven, and in earth, who hath deli-
 “ vered Daniel from the power of the lions; and this
 “ Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the
 “ reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

S E C T. III.

ANOTHER mean by which the knowledge of God was
 communicated to the nations, was tradition; of this there
 were two kinds; the one we may call collateral, and the
 other direct; the knowledge, by collateral tradition, is
 that which was derived in different ages from the church,
 which was in possession of the word of God, or of the
 immediate revelation of his will; that again, by direct
 tradition, was communicated in a direct line from fa-
 ther to son.

I. Of collateral tradition; Abraham, the friend of
 God, was called from his own country, and from his
 father's house, to go into Canaan, thither he went, and,
 as a stranger, travelled up and down, and visited several
 places in it; while a famine prevailed in Canaan, he was

* Dan. vi. 26.

sent to sojourn in Egypt. Though Abraham had many revelations from God, we here abstract from these, and consider him only as a worshipper of God, travelling up and down through the nations. Hagar, his bond-woman, and her son Ishmael, about the age of sixteen, who became the father of a great nation, were dismissed from his family; and they must have been taught the true religion.

The children of Israel resided many years in Egypt, and waxed numerous; they were delivered by a mighty hand; they journeyed forty years in the Wilderness, thro' many tribes; there they received a complete system of the most excellent laws: they entered Canaan, and, under the miraculous conduct of providence, they took possession of it, and there in the sight of the nations, they observed the laws which God gave them.

David made many conquests, so that his son Solomon ruled over many kingdoms, from the river Euphrates, to the border of Egypt: Solomon's fame spread through all nations round about; invited by it, the queen of Sheba came from a great distance, to hear his wisdom. "It was
 " a true report, said she, that I heard in mine own land,
 " of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord
 " God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the
 " throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever,
 " therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and jus-
 " tice*."

Hiram, king of Tyre, who was ever a lover of his father David, made a league with him; their intimacy was great, and the intercourse of their subjects very frequent.

* 1 Kings x. 1, &c.

The Israelites were connected, by commerce, with the Tyrians*; so were the nations along the extensive coasts of the Mediterranean and of the Red Sea; and with these nations, Solomon and his subjects, by means of the Tyrians, carried on trade, even by shipping†. The king, viz. Solomon, had at sea a navy of Tarshish, with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks. In chapter ninth, we read, that a fleet, navigated by the servants of Hiram and of Solomon, sailed from Ezion-gebar, a port in the Red Sea to Ophir. Now, the children of Israel, and their kings, being worshippers of the true God, could not fail, by their words, their example, and the extraordinary providence which attended them, to impart some degree of knowledge concerning God, and his will, to the Gentiles, who lived among them, and to those at a distance whom they visited, these again to others more remote, and to their own children.

The Lord, by Moses, told Pharaoh, ‡ “In very deed, “for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee “my power, and that my name may be declared thro’ “all the earth.” See, || already quoted, what has been said of the first kings of Israel, and their subjects, will hold, in some measure, of their successors, of their intercourse with the nations, and of the influence of that connection.

In process of time, first the ten tribes of Israel, and then those of Judah, were carried captive to Assyria and Babylon, and dispersed through the provinces of that mighty empire: the favour shewn them by several of

* 1 Kings v. † x. 22. ‡ Exod. ix. 16. || 1 Kings x.

the kings of that country, and their wide dispersion thro' the provinces, from Judea to Aethiopia*, must, probably, have procured them respect from the numerous inhabitants, and, perhaps, regard to the God whom they worshipped. We have already heard of the veneration of Nebuchadnezzar for the God of Israel; and concerning Cyrus, it is said, that the Lord stirred up his spirit, and he issued a proclamation for the return of the Jews from their captivity, beginning with these words:

“ Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of
 “ heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth,
 “ and he hath charged me to build him an house at Je-
 “ rusalem, which is in Judah.”

King Ahafuerus promoted Mordecai the Jew to the highest rank in the kingdom, next to himself, and, by a decree, issued in favour of the Jews, preserved them in all the hundred and twenty seven provinces of his empire, after they had been maliciously devoted to destruction†. Now, if the people followed the example of their princes, which they commonly do, they must have shewn respect to the Jews, and some degree of reverence to the God whom they served.

There were proselytes from among the nations, who were taught the will of God, who embraced the Jewish, *i. e.* the true religion, and came, at stated times, to worship at Jerusalem; of this, instances shall be afterwards given; of the Jews, there were numbers taken captive in war, and sudden invasions, and sold as slaves to nations at a distance: “ They have cast lots for my people, and
 “ have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for
 “ wine, that they might drink‡.” And of Zidon, he

* See Ezra and Neh.

† Esther viii. and ix.

‡ Joel iii. 3.

says, among other things, “the children of Judah, and
 “the children of Jerusalem, have they sold to the Gre-
 “cians, that ye might remove them far from their bor-
 “der.”

As the communication was opened by the Grecian and Roman conquests, many of the Jews removed, and settled, for the sake of commerce, in Asia Minor, in Greece, and even in Italy.

But it will, perhaps, be said, that the Jews, as appears from their own history, were prone to embrace the religion of the heathens, their neighbours; that their own, and the heathen writings, represent them, as might be easily proved, as a contemptible people, and even hateful to their neighbours, on account of their religion; and, therefore, it is not probable, that their religion would gain many proselytes, or be of general use in the world.

That few of the heathen, in comparison, became converts to the Jewish religion, will be acknowledged; but, although they did not generally embrace the whole system of that religion, it does not follow, that they received no instruction, no improvement by any doctrine of it, or by the example of the Jews, who professed their belief of such doctrines. Let us take, for instance, the doctrine concerning the one true God; of him, they had always some notion transmitted by tradition, and the instruction communicated by the Jews, and their example, in paying adoration to him, had an evident tendency to improve and confirm that notion: at any rate, if the nations did not generally profit by these means of instruction, which were evidently afforded them, if they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, they were the more inexcusable.

Whatever inclination the Jews might discover, now

and then, to idolatry, we find, that many strangers had joined themselves to them; the number of these, in the days of Solomon, was an hundred and fifty thousand, and three thousand and six hundred; these, it is said, were in the land of Israel*. Now, that great numbers of them became proselytes to the Jewish religion, we may well suppose, especially as they lived in so flourishing a kingdom, and under so renowned a prince. Strangers were admitted to hear the law, and to enjoy every opportunity of instruction. † “At the feast of tabernacles, “gather the people together, men, women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that “they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the “Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of “this law.” Thus strangers were encouraged to learn the true religion, and by submitting to its institutions, they were allowed to partake in its ordinances, and, of course, to enjoy, as well as the Jews, all the privileges and blessings annexed to the right performance of its duties‡.

Said Solomon, in his address to God, at the dedication of the temple, || “Moreover, concerning the stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of “a far country for thy name’s sake (for they shall hear “of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy “stretched out arm,) when he shall come and pray towards this house, hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth “to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy

* 2 Chron. ii. 17. † Deut. xxxi. 12. ‡ Exod. xii. 48.
 Numb. ix. 14 and 15. xiv. 15, 16, 26. || 1 Kings viii. 41.

“ name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that
 “ they may know that this house which I have builded,
 “ is called by thy name.” We have seen that strangers
 were kindly received by the Jews, and that strangers so-
 journed among them: and, from the passage just now
 quoted, we may observe the following things.

1. That Solomon, from what he had already observed,
 foresaw, or rather by the spirit of prophecy, foretold,
 that strangers from a far country would come and pray
 towards the house which he built.

2. He mentions the occasion, or mean of their coming,
 viz. the report which would be spread into distant coun-
 tries, concerning the name of the Lord: “ for they shall
 “ hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of
 “ thy stretched-out arm.”

3. What the consequence of the strangers coming, and
 praying, and being heard, would be, *v. g.* “ that all peo-
 “ ple of the earth might know the name of God, and
 “ fear him.” He here supposes, that the people of the
 earth, or of distant countries, would know the name of the
 Lord, by the same means by which the strangers, of whom
 he now speaks, knew it, *v. g.* by tradition or report from
 the strangers, who had gone, or were to go, to worship
 at Jerusalem, and, no doubt, from Jews also, who either
 travelled among them, or were by some means or other
 taken captive. Of this last we have a remarkable in-
 stance in the case of Naaman the Syrian, who, by the in-
 formation of a Jewish maid, who had been carried out of
 her own country, applied for a cure of his leprosy to Elisha
 the prophet of the Lord, and became a convert, or almost
 a convert, to the true religion. * “ The Syrians had gone

* 2 Kings v.

“ out by companies, and had brought away out of the
 “ land of Israel, a little maid, and she waited upon Naa-
 “ man’s wife, and she said unto her mistress, would God,
 “ my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria; for
 “ he would recover him of his leprosy: and one went in
 “ and told his lord, saying, thus and thus said the maid
 “ that is of the land of Israel: Naaman went to the pro-
 “ phet, and, by his direction, was miraculously cured, by
 “ washing in the water of Jordan; and Naaman said, up-
 “ on his return, to the prophet, Behold, now I know,
 “ that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; ver.
 “ 17. Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt
 “ offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the
 “ Lord.”

From this notable piece of history, it will not be deem-
 ed unreasonable that we infer, that, if we consider the
 numbers of Jews dispersed among the nations, numbers
 of them, no doubt, in the same condition with this maid,
 and the many strangers or proselytes coming from a far
 to worship at Jerusalem, and returning again to their
 country and friends. Many instances similar to the one
 now given, of favourable reports concerning the Jews,
 their religion, and the God whom they served, and of
 the good effects of these reports, must have happened,
 although they are not recorded.

The translation of the scriptures, too, from the original
 into the Greek language, opened an easy way, by means
 of the Grecian conquests, for the communication of the
 scriptures, and of the important truths which they con-
 tained, to very distant nations.

In the Acts of the Apostles*, we read of devout

* Acts ii.

Jews and profelytes from all nations under heaven, who were at Jerusalem, when the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, was poured forth upon the apostles; among others, “the dwellers in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and profelytes.” Hence it is evident,

1. That Solomon’s prediction, formerly mentioned, was fulfilled, or that his prayer was really heard.

2. That the influence of the Jewish, or true religion, was not so small, as is commonly supposed; and that although the number of profelytes was small, in comparison of the whole of mankind, the nations around, even remote ones, would receive general benefit by tradition, or the reports of strangers among them; and, therefore, that the church of God, favoured with the immediate revelation of his will, has been, during the several ages, as the salt of the earth, a mean of light to the world, which has been more clearly, or faintly, discerned, as men lived near to, or remote from it.

S E C T IV.

I NOW proceed to consider that tradition, which we have called direct, viz. that which was conveyed, in every age, in a direct line from father to son. As this ought, properly, to be dated from the dispersion, it would be of great use, could we exactly determine what knowledge of God mankind had, when they were dispersed at the building of Babel: it does not appear, from the sacred history, that they were at that time even idolaters, much less, that they did not acknowledge the one supreme God: as early, indeed, as the days of Terah, the father of Abraham,

we find that idolatry was practised*. “And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood,” *i. e.* of Euphrates, in old time, “even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, and they served other gods.” At the same time, it is evident, that their deviations from the true religion were small in comparison of those in after ages.

In the sacred writings, relating to these early times, there are many instances recorded of men, who, by the aid of original tradition, acknowledged the true God, and some of them the true God only. In Egypt, Pharaoh, the king, in the case of Sarah, when he knew that she was Abraham’s wife, appears to have paid great respect to God, and to his will†; it is said, indeed, that God plagued him on Sarah’s account; but, although more numerous plagues, some ages after this, were inflicted upon one of his successors, he did not obey so readily, in letting the children of Israel go. In Canaan, Abimelech, king of Gerar, seems to have acknowledged and worshipped the true God, and to have paid great regard to his will; for he reproved Abraham and Sarah for their dissimulation, and insinuated, that Abraham was in a mistake, in supposing that the fear of God was not in that place, before he entered it: “What sawest thou, “that thou hast done this thing‡?”

In the same country, Melchisedek, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God, went out, and met Abraham, when he returned from the defeat of the four kings||, he brought with him bread and wine, and he blessed him, *i. e.* Abraham, and said, “Blessed be Abraham

* Josh. xxiv. 2.

† Gen. xii.

‡ xx.

|| xiv.

“ of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth;
 “ and blessed be the most high God, which hath de-
 “ livered thine enemies into thy hand.” It is said, that
 this man was priest of the most high God. Now, the
 heads of families, and princes among their tribes, which
 were only more numerous families, were always, in an-
 tient times, their priests: this custom, probably, of di-
 vine appointment, had prevailed among mankind ever
 since the fall; it is evident, then, that Melchisedek’s priest-
 hood was not of Abraham’s appointment; he naturally
 paid respect to Abraham, as the friend of God; but, as
 he was the priest, he appears to have been also the devout
 worshipper, of the most high God, and of him only, be-
 fore he became at all acquainted with Abraham. There-
 fore, whatever additional information concerning God,
 and his will, the men of Egypt, and of Canaan, received
 by means of Abraham, part at least of their knowledge
 of God, and of the manner of worshipping him, was de-
 rived to them from direct, or original tradition.

In Mesopotamia, whither Abraham had sent his ser-
 vant, in order to procure a wife from among his relati-
 ons, for his son Isaac, it appears that the friends of Re-
 bekah acknowledged the God of heaven*. After the
 servant had delivered his message, and told them of the
 favour which God had shewed him, “ Laban and Bethuel
 “ answered, and said, The thing proceedeth from the
 “ Lord, we cannot speak unto thee good or bad: Laban
 “ said to Jacob, when he proposed to leave him, I pray
 “ thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry; for
 “ I have learned, by experience, that the Lord hath blef-

* Gen. xxiv. 50.

“ fed me, for thy fake* ;” and when, at parting, they made a covenant, Laban faid, “ No man is with us ; fee, “ God is witnefs between me and thee†.”

True it is, God had appeared to Laban in a dream, when he was in purfuit of Jacob, and forbade him to do him any harm ; but he was acquainted with God before that revelation was made to him, as appears from a paf- fage already quoted ; and, from the history of mankind, in that age, it is evident, that he muft have acknow- ledged one fupreme God, even before Jacob came to fo- journ with him.

When he overtook Jacob on his journey to Canaan, he complained, among other things, that he had ftollen his gods from him‡. Not to trouble the reader with the opinions of the learned, with regard to thefe gods, or teraphim, fome contending, that they were only fo many family pictures ; others, that they were idols made ufe of in worfhip. Suppofing the laft to have been the cafe, they were not the objects to which religious worfhip was ultimately directed ; they were only the means of wor- fhip, contrived by men, while God was the fupreme ob- ject.

In Arabia, Job and his friends were devout worfhippers of the true God ; and, according to his own testimony, remained untainted with the idolatry of thefe times : “ If “ I beheld the fun when it fhined, or the moon walking “ in brightnefs, and my heart hath been fecretly inticed, “ or my mouth hath kifled my hand, this alfo were an “ iniquity, to be punifhed by the Judge||.” God did, indeed, reveal himfelf to Job, and to his friends, as we

* Gen. xxx. 27. † xxxi. 50. ‡ xxxi. 30. || Job xxxi. 26.

read, chap. xxxviii. to the end of the book. Eliphaz speaks of a vision which he had seen by night*. And Elihu speaks of the instruction by dreams†. But, besides all these means of knowledge, there was another, viz. tradition prior to these supernatural discoveries. To tradition we find them often appealing: Says Bildad, ‡ “Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself for the search of their fathers, (for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow) shall not they teach thee, and utter words out of their heart.”

Says Eliphaz, || “I will shew thee, hear me; and that which I have seen I will declare, which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it, unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.” From this I would observe,

1. That there is here an appeal to tradition, concerning the ways of God with men; and, therefore, concerning God himself, although God afterwards reprov'd them, as having been in a mistake in Job's case, that is no objection against the fact in general, viz. that there was such a thing as tradition.

2. That tradition, with regard to God and his providence, seems to have taken its rise from remote antiquity, Bildad says, inquire of the former age, and prepare thyself for the search of their fathers, *i. e.* the fathers of the men of the former age, which they might do by means of tradition handed down from them; Eliphaz says, that what he himself had seen, he would declare, and what wise men have told, he does not say, have told me, perhaps, he had their report from the second or third hand; then

* Job iv.

† xxxiii.

‡ viii. 8.

|| xv. 17.

he adds, what these wise men have told from their fathers: and, besides, the observations which these fathers might themselves have made on providence, they, no doubt, reported what they had heard from their fathers: with regard to these, he says, to whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. Now, to what times could the facts here mentioned refer? To times, it would appear, when the earth was much more thinly peopled, than in the age in which Job lived, the time of the dispersion, *v. g.* or times even more remote. Since Job and his friends then enjoyed the benefit of original tradition, we may conclude, that the same kind of tradition was one mean of knowledge to men, in all the cases which I have enumerated, and that it produced the like effects in all the kingdoms around.

For a father, *v. g.* immediately after the dispersion, at Babel, having the knowledge of God, and of his will, could not fail to communicate it to his children. Hope or fear, or both, would oblige him daily to worship; and that he could perform worship in the sight of his children, without telling them any thing concerning the object of his worship, cannot well be conceived; the desire of communicating knowledge, so natural to men, and love to his children, would prompt him, to give them what information he could.

Man was made for the enjoyment of God, and therefore his mind, however much corrupted, continues very susceptible of notions of some kind or other concerning God, especially when communicated in a way suited to his capacity: though he never could attain to the knowledge of God by the light of nature, when his father, or any other man, tells him, that there is a God, that truth immediately sinks into his mind, and makes so deep an

impression, that though he should incline, it will be very difficult ever after to efface it.

Plato, in one of his dialogues*, discoursing of those who were not fond to acknowledge, as gods, those which were commonly worshipped, viz. the sun and moon, shews how religion was communicated from one generation to another: “Now then, says the Athenian, “being, probably it should be, not being persuaded by “the fables, which, from their infancy, were instilled “into them with their mothers milk, which they heard “from their nurses and mothers, in their incantations, “both in joke and earnest, or in their amusements and “serious employments, represented both to their ears “and eyes, in prayers, sacrifices, and shews, which young “people see and hear with pleasure; while their parents, “solicitous for their own welfare and theirs, offered sa- “crifices to, and addressed them as gods, by prayers and “supplications. They hear of, and observe all the Greeks “and Barbarians, when the sun and moon rise and set, “falling down to them, in the posture of adoration, whe- “ther in adversity, or in prosperity; this practice they “followed, not upon supposition, that they were not, but “that they certainly were gods.”

* De Leg. Lib. X. Νυν ἐν πειθομένοι, (perhaps it should be πειθομένοι) τοῖς μυθοῖς, ὅς ἐκ νεῶν παιδῶν ἐτι ἐν γαλαξὶ τρεφομένοι, τρεφῶν τε μητρὶ καὶ μητέρων, οἷον ἐν ἐπαύροις, μετὰ τε παιδείας, καὶ μετὰ σπουδῆς λεγόμενης, καὶ μετὰ θυσιῶν ἐν εὐχαῖς αὐτοὺς ἀκούοντες τε, καὶ ὁφείουσιν ὁρῶντες ἐπομένους αὐτοῖς, ὅς ἡδιστα ὁ γὰρ νεὸς ὅρα τε καὶ ἀκούει πράττομενας, θυόντων ἐν σπουδῇ τῇ μεγίστῃ τῶν αὐτῶν, ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τε καὶ ἐκείνων ἐσπῶδα κατὰ τὴν, ὥς ὅτι μάλιστα καὶ θεοῖς εὐχαῖς προσδιδόμενων καὶ ἱκετείαις. Ἀνατελλοῦσιν τε ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης, καὶ πρὸς δύσματος ἰόντων, προκυλιστοὶς ἅμα καὶ προσκυνήσεις ἀκούοντες τε καὶ ὁρῶντες Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ βαρβάρων πάντων, ἐν συμφοραῖς παντοῖαις ἐχομένων, καὶ ἐν εὐπραγίαις, ὅχι ὡς οὐκ ὄντων, ἀλλ' ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα ὄντων, καὶ ἐδάμνη ὑποψίαν ἐκδιδόντων, ὡς καὶ εἰσι θεοί.

The works of nature also, being enlightened, as it were, by revelation or tradition, became useful instructors to men; they conspire in bearing witness to that great truth, which men have been previously taught, viz. that there is a God; they are hung up, or displayed as perpetual memorials of it.

As soon as men were informed, by revelation or tradition, concerning God, then, and no sooner, his works become instructive. What I have already said of one man, and his children, and of the instruction which he would naturally communicate to them, will hold of every succeeding race in all ages. Tradition, as it passes, may be obscured under the shade of mysticism, and much corrupted by mixtures of human invention; but the original truth, may, notwithstanding, be always, in some measure, though obscurely, discerned; witness the nations most distant from the original scene of knowledge, and the most barbarous which have been discovered; however ignorant, they have been all, without exception, found to acknowledge a superior Being or Deity.

The several means of knowledge, which I have mentioned, *v. g.* express revelations made to many in different countries, to the patriarchs and their children; tradition deduced from these revelations; and tradition directly conveyed from father to son, down all along from the dispersion of mankind, and the works of creation and providence bearing witness, and giving additional weight to these traditions, were sufficient for all the knowledge we find in the heathen world, and might have afforded much more, had men been disposed to have made the proper use of them.

P A R T III.

S E C T. I.

IDOLATRY, it must be acknowledged, was early introduced, simple at first, but, by degrees, more complicated, and absurd; their first deviation from the manner of worship which God prescribed, and which tradition taught them, was their worshipping the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars; or God by the means of these. This may appear from the noted passage in Job, formerly quoted*. Plato, in the dialogue which treats of the proper use of words†, says, “The first inhabitants of
 “Greece, accounted these as gods, which many Barba-
 “rians now reckon gods, v. g. the sun, moon, earth,
 “stars, and heaven; and, observing them in perpetual
 “motion, called them gods, a name taken from their mo-
 “tion‡. As they began, by degrees, to consider the
 “whole system of nature, as inspired by a god or gods, all
 “under one supreme head, they were led to pay divine
 “honours to the elements, to mountains, trees, rivers,
 “beasts, and men departed, and by these to the gods
 “with which they were supposed to be inspired.

The causes of idolatry may have been,

1. A desire to have some thing sensible or visible as the object, or at least, the medium of their worship:
 “Up, said the Israelites to Aaron, when Moses was in
 “the Mount||, make us gods, which shall go before us;
 “and when Aaron saw the calf, he built an altar before

* xxxi. 26.
 THE 7th DECEMBER.

† In Cratylo.
 || Exod. xxxii.

‡ ΑΠΟ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΥΣΕΩΣ

“ it, and made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a “ feast to the Lord,” *i. e.* they were to worship God, it seems, by means of the calf. Though this was not the original, but a copy of something of the same kind which they had seen in Egypt; the cause of the copy appears to have been the cause of the original, the desire of having a visible God, or a representative of him.

2. A love of speculation, a disposition to inquire into, to reason upon the appearances in nature, and to make new discoveries in religion independent of tradition, and, consequently, to obtain a name by that means. Shuckford, from several authors whom he quotes, observes*, that Syphis, the first of that name, king of Egypt, was the first who introduced speculations of this kind; that he did this in emulation of Abraham, his cotemporary, who was greatly renowned for his acquaintance with God, and his knowledge of religion; and that his pretence to have seen God, *i. e.* in the way of natural reason, was the foundation of all the Egyptian errors in religion. As idolatry prevailed, in some degree, through Egypt, and the rest of the world, before this time, it cannot be meant, that his speculations were the source of all idolatry, but that he reduced idolatry into some kind of system; and, therefore, that men would the more readily embrace it, because it was recommended under the appearance of being rational.

3. Another, and no doubt a chief cause, may have been the unsuitableness of their tempers to the divine character, to be obliged to worship, and converse with the all-perfect and holy God, would, to men disposed as they were, be a species of torment; therefore, from the love

* Connect. Vol. I.

of ease, and independence, they brought down, in their imaginations, the Divine character to a lower standard, and worshipped him, not according to his nature, and the mode which he prescribed, but according to one of their own contrivance: “They did not like to retain
 “ God in their knowledge; they became vain in their
 “ imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened;
 “ professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;
 “ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into
 “ an image made like to corruptible man,” &c*.

But though they entertained wrong notions of God, and practised modes of worship which he condemned, from some instances already adduced, and from the general testimony of antiquity, it appears, that they acknowledged one supreme God, to whom all the rest of their gods were considered as subordinate, in the rank only of deputies or ministers. This supreme God was designed Jupiter or Jove, from יהוה, Jehovah probably, the name of the true God among the Jews. Jove, Hesiod calls the Father of gods and men†. According to Homer, he was sometimes addressed in company with the other Gods‡; he is, however, always represented by that poet, as presiding among the gods, in their councils, directing them in their measures, and ordering the lot of mankind. The same sentiment concerning one God supreme, is expressed by all the succeeding heathen poets, both Greek and Latin.

As to philosophers, we shall begin with Plato, the prince of them: *Deum quendam*, says Cicero, *philosophorum*; if he speaks of gods, he makes also frequent mention of God in the singular; and, here, if Socrates, whose

* Rom. i.

† Theog. L. 47.

‡ Iliad. L. 701.

apology Plato hath preserved, or made, died as a martyr for the unity of God, it would be one proof of greater knowledge of God, and of higher regard to him, in the heathen world, than I am contending for: but, as I am not convinced of the truth of that opinion, I will not take the advantage of it.

Socrates himself gives the judges a distinct account of the cause of the prosecution carried on against him, *v. g.* “That he had gone about with several disciples, “ young men, detected the ignorance of many pretend- “ ers to knowledge, and exposed them to the derision of “ his followers; resentment therefore prompted them to “ accuse him; and where appearances occurred to his dis- “ advantage, they would readily improve them against “ him. One great article of the accusation, was, that “ he corrupted the youth, by teaching them not to ac- “ knowledge, as gods, those which the state acknowledged, “ but some new daemons, alluding, perhaps, to the dae- “ mon, which, he said, always attended him; he had in- “ troduced, and delighted in a doubtful mode of dispu- “ tation; and, as he seemed to doubt of every thing, “ Melitus, one of his accusers, concludes and affirms of “ him, that he believed there were no gods. Socrates, “ in his reply, says, Do you mean, that I don’t acknow- “ ledge, as others do, the sun and moon to be gods? By “ Jove, gentlemen, addressing the judges, I do not ac- “ count these as gods, since they, *i. e.* probably the mul- “ titude, say, that the sun is a stone, and the moon “ earth.” But from this, or any circumstance like it, to conclude, that he worshipped not the gods of the nations, or acknowledged their gods in no respect as gods, would, perhaps, be rash, and inconsistent with truth. In the pas- sage above quoted, he seems to mean one of these two

things: either, first, that since they determined so positively concerning the heavenly bodies, and their natures, affirming, that the sun and moon were earth and stone only, and not animated by the soul of the world, or by some deity; in that light he would not acknowledge them as gods; this, it is probable, was his meaning.

Or, in the next place, that the worship of the multitude, in his opinion, terminated in these gods, without any regard to the supreme Being; and, therefore, since they degraded them so much on the one hand, and yet worshipped them as supreme on the other, he could not, in these views, consider them as gods. Socrates, living and dying, appears to have been a polytheist; and all I can infer from his history, as far as I can understand it, is, that like the rest of his neighbours, he worshipped a plurality of gods, with one as sovereign over the rest, who, in all cases, obtained the smallest share; shall I add, that he introduced a sceptical mode of reasoning, the effects of which have reached down to us, and proved the ruin of many; “they became vain in their imaginations.”

To enumerate all the passages in Plato, which mention one God as supreme, would be endless. Let a few to that purpose suffice.

“Mind is more antient than body; to it the making
“and formation of all things belong*.” That by mind here, he understands God, is evident from many other passages.

“Considering the bulk of the sun and stars, says he,
“we must conclude, that the only cause of their motion
“is God; the heavenly bodies must either be gods, or

* Τὸτο δὲ ἐστὶ σχεδόν, ὃ μόνω πλατίνει καὶ δημιουργεῖν προσήκει.

“ images of the gods; they ought to be called visible
 “ gods. Next to these are the daemons, the messengers
 “ between the superior gods and the earth; they are sub-
 “ ject to pleasure and pain; but God, whose lot is entire-
 “ ly divine, is free from these passions*.”

“ There is something which always exists, but was not
 “ made or generated; and something which was made,
 “ but does not exist, *i. e.* probably of itself; God taking
 “ every thing visible, restless, and disorderly, reduced
 “ them into order; for it cannot be, that the best of Be-
 “ ings could make any thing but what was most beauti-
 “ ful; there can be no mind or reason without a soul;
 “ for this reason, by placing a mind in the soul, and the
 “ soul in a body, he formed the universe, a most beau-
 “ tiful work. It seems reasonable to conclude, if we go
 “ upon probabilities, that this world is an animal, and,
 “ by the providence of God, formed rational; that he
 “ placed the soul in the middle, and diffused it through
 “ the whole.”

In another place, the Father, *i. e.* “ the God of the
 “ universe, is represented as summoning the gods, and
 “ telling them, that since they are made, they are subject
 “ to dissolution, but that his will, will prevent that disso-
 “ lution: he recommends to them the formation of some
 “ things, without which the world would not be com-
 “ plete, and promises to give them principles or seeds for
 “ that purpose: he distributed souls according to the
 “ number of the stars: he recommended to the inferior
 “ gods, or daemons, the formation of man, *i. e.* under
 “ his direction†.”

* Epinomis variis locis. † Timaeus.

“ There are two causes of all things, *v. g.* mind and necessity; the first is God, the author of the best things, and the causes which concur with him, are to be ranked under necessity*. All things are in, or about the universal Sovereign, and for his sake all things exist†.”

Plato, in a letter to Hermias, exhorts him, and his friends, “ to invoke, as a witness, God the ruler of all things, which are, or shall be‡. The world is the disposition or order of all things, preserved by God, and for God||. God is the preserver and Father of all things through the world. Though the divine cause is invisible, that by no means hinders him from acting; nor is it a reason why we should not believe that he is; for the soul, by which we live, and inhabit cities and houses, is invisible, but discerned by its operations. In like manner we ought to conceive of God, who in power is most mighty, in beauty excellent, in life immortal, in virtue the best§.”

Plutarch, it seems, was of opinion, that there were two principles, a good and a bad, with something as a medium of harmony between them; he quotes the Persian Magi, the Chaldeans, the Greek poets and philosophers, as having been of the same opinion concerning the two principles with himself; yet, with them, he supposes the good principle to have been superior; and further observes, “ Since the most approved philosophers would not neglect or dishonour any obscure image or intimation concerning God, which they perceived in

* In Timaeo Locro. † Platonis, Epist. 2da, ad Dionysium.
 ‡ Τον των παντων θεον ηγεμονα, των τε οντων, και των μελλοντων. || Διακοσμησις των ολων, φυλαττομενη υπο θεου, και δια θεου. Aristot. de Mundo. § Idem. ibid.

“ inanimate and insensible things; much more, in my
 “ opinion, says he, should the properties of things sen-
 “ sible, which have a soul, passions, and manners, be re-
 “ spected*.”

* De Isid. et Osirid. Pag 382 Vol 3. Lutet. Paris.

Εἰπερ ἐν, οἱ δοκιματᾶσι τῶν φίλοσοφων, εὐδὲ ἐν αἰσυχνοῖς καὶ α-
 σωματοῖς πραγμασιν ἀνιγμὰ τε θεῶ καὶ ἰδόντες ἤξιον ἀμελεῖν
 εὐδὲν, εὐδὲ ἀτιμαζέειν, ἐτι μᾶλλον οἰομαι τὰς ἐν ἀσθανομέναις
 καὶ ψυχὴν ἐχούσας, καὶ πάθος καὶ ἦθος φύσεσιν, ιδιοτήτας κα-
 τὰ το ἦθος. Then follows a remarkable passage, which I shall

quote with Xylander's Latin translation, and endeavour to ex-
 plain the meaning of it: the words are, Ἀγαπητέον ἐν, ὃ τὰντα
 τιμνῆας, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν το θεῶν, ὡς ἐναργεσέων ἐσοπτρῶν, καὶ
 φύσει γεγονότων, ὡς ὄργανον, ἢ τέχνην αἰεὶ τε παντὶ κόσμῳ θεῶ
 νομίζειν καλῶς. Lat. Transl. At enim probandi sunt, non qui
 isthaec, sed qui per haec numen venerantur, itaque recte ha-
 bentur, pro speculis clarioribus, et natura suppeditatis, tan-
 quam instrumenta, et artificia, Dei, universa ornantis: the
 words may be literally rendered thus: “ We ought therefore
 “ to be satisfied or content, that they who honour not these
 “ things themselves, but the divinity by them, as so many mir-
 “ rors, clear, and formed by nature, consider it, or them, as
 “ the organ and art of God, who always adorns all things.”

If ὄργανον and τέχνην refer to θεῶν, which seems more natural,
 than that they should be construed with ἐσοπτρῶν, we find a
 passage similar to this, which may help, perhaps, to throw light
 upon it, in a letter of Plato's to Hermias, formerly quoted;
 there he exhorts him, and his friends, to invoke, as a witness,
 God, the ruler of all things, which are and shall be, and the
 Father, the Lord of that ruler and cause; καὶ τὸν τῶν πάντων
 θεὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν τε ὄντων, καὶ τῶν μελλόντων, τε, τε ἡγεμόνος καὶ
 αὐτὸς πατέρα κυρίου, ἐπομνυῆας. The meaning, then, of the pas-
 sage in Plutarch may be, that the things in nature deified, were
 not properly objects of worship: but, as it were, speculums, thro'
 which they discerned and worshipped the divinity, which divi-
 nity is subservient to, and dependent upon the supreme God,
 as his organ and instrument, in the formation and government
 of all things: but this I leave to the judgment of the learned.
 See also his treatise entituled, Why God delays to punish sin;
 and that concerning the word ΕΙ inscribed on the temple of Del-
 phos.

It appears also from the writings of Cicero, that he was of the same opinion with those already mentioned, however many gods he admits of; he testifies his belief of one supreme; as a proof of this, I shall quote a few passages, only from his books of laws; he lays it down as the foundation of his laws, that all nature is governed by the power of the immortal gods, and that the animal, which we call man, with so many endowments, was made in an excellent state by the supreme God*.

“ Since there is nothing better than reason; and man
 “ and God partake of it, the first bond of society be-
 “ tween God and man, is reason†.” In the same place, he speaks of men, or gods, and men being subject to this heavenly law, and divine mind, and almighty God‡.
 “ The true and first law, fit for commanding what should
 “ be done, and forbidding what should be left undone, is
 “ the right reason of the supreme Jove||.”

S E C T. II.

AS to those who denied the being of the gods, or of God, and of providence, what the Athenian says§, in his supposed address to such men, may, in general, hold true, v. g. that few or none, who, in their youth, have taken up that opinion with regard to the gods, v. g. that there

* Animal hoc providum, sagax, multiplex, acutum, memor, plenum rationis et concilii, quem vocamus hominem praeclara quadam conditione generatum esse, a summo Deo. † Quoniam nihil ratione melius, eaque in homine, et in Deo, prima homini cum Deo rationis societas. ‡ Multo magis parent huic coelesti descriptioni mentique divinae, et praepotenti Deo. De Legibus, Lib. I. || Lex vera, atque princeps, apta ad jubendum, et ad vetandum, ratio est recta summi Jovis. Ibid. Lib. II. § Plato de Leg. Lib. X.

are none have retained it until old age; Cotta, in answer to Velleius*, with regard to Epicurus, who, by denying the providence, in effect, denied the being of God, says, "That he never saw any one dread more than he, viz. Epicurus, what he denied to be objects of terror, death, and the gods†;" For that a man should be able to eradicate from his mind all the principles of education, that he should be able to encounter and overcome all the concurring evidences of truth, which he behoved every day to meet with, tradition, the example of the world around, and the works of creation and providence, and to bring himself to a quiet, full, and permanent belief, that there is no God, or no providence, seems to be a very arduous, if not an impossible task.

But supposing, that there have been some, who have been so far sunk in ignorance, and hardened against every mean of conviction, as to persevere in unbelief concerning God and providence, particular instances of that kind, here and there, could not stop the course of tradition, or be any proof, that there was no such thing, any more than instances of the same kind, under the gospel, can be any evidence that Christianity has no effect, or that it is not founded on truth.

It has been shewed, from their own writings, that the heathen, in general, admitted of one supreme and independent God; at the same time, it must be acknowledged, that they had very imperfect notions of him, and of his will; the idolatry into which their folly betrayed them,

* Cicero De Nat. Deor. Lib. I. Nec quemquam vidi, qui magis ea, quae timenda esse negaret, timeret, mortem dico, et Deos.

and from which they could never, by their own wisdom, have emerged, is an undoubted proof of this.

The Apostle, writing to the Romans*, says, that they, namely, “the heathen, are without excuse, because, “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; “that they changed the truth of God into a lie, and “worshipped and served the creature more than the “Creator; that they did not like to retain God in their “knowledge; therefore he gave them over to a reprobate “mind.”

Now, we have here to consider two things:

1. When the facts here mentioned could be affirmed of the heathen world, viz. “when they knew God, and “did not glorify him, or did not like to retain him in “their knowledge.”

2. How they are said to have “worshipped the creature more than the Creator.”

As to the first of these, it has been formerly shewn, that idolatry was not introduced all at once; its progress was gradual, and it was not, probably, till after many years were elapsed, that they sunk into idolatry of the grossest kind, or “changed the glory of the incorruptible God, “into an image made like to corruptible man.” This was done first in Egypt, the great nursery of idolatry, and from thence the infection was communicated to the other nations: now, they evidently knew God, and did not like to retain him in their knowledge after the dispersion, or about the time of it; for, soon after, idolatry seems to have commenced.

Besides, during the time that idolatry was advancing, till it arrived at its height, and ever after, in every age,

they appear to have had some knowledge of God, at first more clear, afterwards more imperfect and obscure. This knowledge they derived from tradition, and from the works of creation and providence, which gave constant testimony to tradition: they were to blame, in not improving that knowledge, by the means afforded them, and in neglecting to apply it to the purposes intended by it, viz. the honour of God, and the good of men; for, instead of attempting to instruct and reform the vulgar, their wise men seem to have studied to monopolize the knowledge they had acquired, to hide it under the vail of mystery, and either sincerely, or by connivance, to have joined with the multitude in their idolatry. Therefore what the apostle says, “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, and did not like to retain God in their knowledge,” seems to be applicable to all the heathen in every age, without exception; more so to their philosophers, or wise men, who travelled, and had greater opportunities of knowledge than the vulgar; still more to those who lived near to the source of knowledge, or had frequent opportunities of learning the will of God from those who were favoured with the revelation of it; but, particularly, to those who lived when idolatry commenced, and had contributed to the introduction of it.

2. It is said, “that they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” This refers directly to their idolatry or creature worship; though the learned among them differed in their opinions concerning the creation of the world, and the share which God had in it, great numbers believed, that God made the world, or rather, perhaps, that he reduced it into the order in which we now see it. Now, supposing it true, that the creatures were not the ultimate objects of their worship, but in-

tended as means only, in their plan, of devotion to God. The number of their inferior deities was so great, that before their devotion, such as it was, could pass through so many mediums, and reach to God, it must have evaporated, if we may so speak; or, in other words, their dependence upon their imaginary gods, the supposed representatives and ministers of the supreme, was so great, that the little devotion they had was bestowed upon these; and, therefore, though in words they acknowledged a supreme God, and professed to worship him, in effect, he was neglected; they worshipped and served “the creature more than the Creator.”

The Apostle, when at Athens*, saw an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. That there was an inscription to the unknown God, in the singular number, is evident, even from heathen testimony†. The whole inscription was, “To the gods of Asia, of Europe, and Africa, to the unknown and strange god‡.”

1. Then, if the Athenians dedicated this altar to the tutelary deity of some country, of which country and deity, they had never heard, nor had any knowledge at all, the Apostle, in this view of the inscription, could not, with any propriety, have addressed them in these words, “Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you;” for the God whom he preached was not the god of any particular unknown country, but the God, as he himself declares, who made the world, and all things therein: besides, they were not entirely ignorant of the God whom he preached; therefore this could not

* Acts xvii. 23. † Lucian. Dial. in Philopatr. ‡ Whitby from Oecum.

be the meaning of the inscription, nor of the Apostle's address.

2. If, from the very circumstance of the inscription to the unknown God, it should be supposed, that the Apostle took an opportunity to discourse of the true God, that made the world, his meaning would be, as if he had said, ye have dedicated an altar, and pay devotion to a God, of whom ye know nothing, and of whom ye have never heard; but ye have done this upon supposition, that there may possibly be such a God; now I declare to you the God that made the world, of whom ye know as little as of the other. But how does it appear, that they had heard, or known as little of the true God, as of any imaginary deity, of the existence of which they were entirely ignorant? In the next place, if the unknown God was only a fiction of their own imaginations, and if the God whom he declared to them, was not, in any degree, intended, by the inscription, to the unknown God, how could the Apostle say, "whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you?" Therefore,

3dly, This unknown God was, perhaps, the God of the Jews, of whom they must have heard; they may have named him the unknown God, partly, because he was described as unsearchable in his nature and perfections, and because his name, as the Jews reported, was ineffable; and, partly, because he was not so social in his worship as other gods; he would not allow his people to worship the gods of the nations, and punished them when in this case they disobeyed: nor would he admit the heathen, without a change of their religion, into the same intimacy with him, if I may so speak, as were the Jews; therefore, since the heathen, as such, were kept at a distance, as it were, from the God of the Jews, they might

dedicate an altar to him, under the name of the unknown God; unknown in comparison of the other gods, to whom they gave particular names, to whom, in their opinion, they had daily access, and with whom they were well acquainted. Now, this altar, with this inscription, they may have erected, intending, if the power of this God reached beyond Judea, or if he might have any hand in the calamities, which, now and then, were inflicted on them, by this means, to appease, and render him friendly.

Upon this supposition, the Apostle, with great propriety, addressed the Athenians, “whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you;” whom ye worship ignorantly, because ye know him not, or but very imperfectly; ignorantly, because ye know not his will, or the manner of worship, which will be acceptable to him; ignorantly, because ye consider him as a local deity, as the God of Judea only, and worship him accordingly. This God is he who made the world, and all things therein, “him declare I unto you.”

When the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria, there was a number of heathen sent from that country, to supply their place in the land of Israel. Upon an information made to the king, that evil befel them, because they understood not the manner of the God of the land, he sent back a Jewish priest, to teach them the manner of the God of the land, *i. e.* how to worship the true God, whom almost all the heathen around considered as a topical deity, or the God of Judea only*, alluding, perhaps, to some species of remaining idolatry among the Samaritans, the descendants of the people of whom we

* 2 Kings xvii. chap.

have been now speaking, or at least to their manner of worshipping God. Our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what*." Nor does it at all follow, because the heathen considered the God of the Jews, as a particular God, generally limited in his government to one country; that, therefore, they did not acknowledge one supreme God; for, according to their system, these two were very consistent.

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being†, as certain also of your own poets," viz. Aratus, "have said; for we are also his offspring." The poet here speaks of Jove, the principal god among the heathen. Now this Jove, as if he had said, whom ye consider as paramount to all other gods, is, though ye have, in a great measure, lost the knowledge of him, the same with Jehovah, the true God, the God of the Jews, the Creator of all, we are all his offspring.

I shall conclude this section, with a passage from the Epistle to the Romans‡: "As many as have sinned without law," *i. e.* the heathen who have sinned without the written law of Moses, "shall also perish without law." Now punishment, included in the word PERISH, supposes a transgression, and transgression supposes a law; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." There is ONE law, then, binding upon all men, and at all times. This ONE law supposes one God, whose will it is; and this God must be known, in some measure, to all men, in order to render the transgression of his will culpable in all; and, therefore, a cause of punishment. Therefore, since this passage refers to the heathen of every class,

* John iv. 22.

† Acts xvii. 28.

‡ ii. 12.

without exception, they must have had some knowledge of God, whose law was binding on them.

S E C T III.

IT has been shewn, from the sacred as well as heathen writings, that the heathen acknowledged a supreme God, and that all of them had some notion of the true God; at the same time, it must be allowed, that their knowledge, in this respect, was very defective, and not at all proportioned to the means of information which they had, or might have had in their power; the highest pretenders to reason and knowledge among them, were, it seems, polytheists; the opinions which they entertained concerning a variety of gods or daemons, inferior to the supreme God, and employed by him in the affairs of men, leave us no room to doubt of this. If their wise men betrayed so much ignorance with regard to God, and his will, what must have been the condition of the vulgar, who enjoyed not so great advantages? By philosophers they are generally treated with contempt, represented as ignorant, and prone to vice; the learned, instead of instructing them, seem, through their great vanity, to have industriously concealed from them the truths which they knew; Plato, writing to Dionysius, says, “Concerning
“ the nature of the first cause, I must address you in
“ aenigmas, that, if any thing befall this letter, by sea or
“ land, he who chances to read, may not understand it.”

Some of them reproach one another with weakneses, and sometimes with great crimes; and, from the writings of the best of them, it appears, that they were not very averse to crimes which nature shuns to mention; and, therefore, the character which the Apostle gives of

them*, holds with regard to all of them without exception.

Says the same Apostle†, “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils,” in the original, to daemons, “not to God.”

“There are certain natures, or beings‡, between gods and men, liable to the diseases of mortals||, which, as they are accounted daemons, by the law of our fathers, ought to be worshipped§. The sacrifices offered, the festivals and unlucky days observed, on which men ate raw flesh**, sometimes fasted, afflicted themselves, spake obscenely, and acted like madmen, with their necks distorted, were not intended in honour of any god, but in order to avert the anger of wicked daemons. And the human sacrifices which were formerly offered, the gods, it is probable, did not require, nor admit of; nor did kings and generals deliver up their children to be sacrificed, unless to appease the wrath of evil and malicious daemons, and to gratify the mad and tyrannical lust of some of them, who could not enjoy their bodies, *i. e.* the bodies of their children††.”

“Besides, the supreme God, and the soul of the world, and the other gods, the world, the moving and fixed stars, visible gods, there is a multitude of invisible beings, which Plato, without distinction, called daemons; to some of these, men have given particular names, and paid divine honours and worship; some of them, again, have been distinguished by no particular names, but,

* Rom. i. 28. † 1 Cor. x. 20. ‡ Φύσεις. || Δεχο-
μενοι παθη θνῆτα. § Plutarch De Orac. Def. ** Do not
σπαραγναι καὶ διασπασμοί, signify the tearing of mens bodies,
and the eating of their flesh raw? †† Idem. ibidem.

“ by certain persons, in some villages and towns, have
 “ been designed by obscure names, and worshipped in se-
 “ cret; the remaining multitude are commonly called
 “ by the name of daemons: concerning all of them, the
 “ opinion is, that, if provoked by neglect, they will do
 “ hurt, and that, if appeased by prayers, supplications,
 “ and suitable sacrifices, they will do good*.”

Our author goes on to explain Plato's doctrine with regard to daemons: “ The souls descended from the soul
 “ of the universe, bear rule through the large space un-
 “ der the moon, and are to be considered as good dae-
 “ mons; but the souls which govern not the spirit
 “ which adheres to them†, but are overcome by it, by
 “ means of its anger and desires, are led and violently
 “ driven by it, these souls are daemons, but may be
 “ justly called wicked daemons‡.”

The many appearances of good angels, and of Satan, the prince of evil angels, for instance, in the case of our first parents, and of Job, mentioned in scripture, and of which the world, in the first ages, could not be ignorant, give rise, no doubt, to the knowledge which men had, with regard to other spirits besides God, superior to themselves. Here was a wide field for the imaginations of men, when they had rejected the truth, to roam in; hence the many fabulous accounts among the heathen, of superior beings, of their orders, their tempers, and offices; and hence the various modes of worship instituted, and the kinds of sacrifices offered to them, according as they were supposed to be good or evil.

The worship of daemons had been early introduced into

* Porphyrii De Abstin. Lib. II. Sect. 37. † Τὰ σὺν ἑαυτοῖς πνεύματα.
 ‡ Ibid. Sect. 38.

the heathen world; against this, God cautioned his people, without any distinction made of daemons, whether good or bad: “They shall no more offer their sacrifices
 “unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring*.”
 They, *i. e.* the children of Israel, in imitation of the heathen, “sacrificed unto devils, not to God†, to gods
 “whom they knew not, to new gods, that came newly
 “up, whom your fathers feared not. Thou shalt not do
 “so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to
 “the Lord, which he hateth, have they,” *i. e.* the heathen, “done unto their gods; for even their sons and their
 “daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods‡.”

In the gospels, we read of many possessed with devils, *i. e.* with daemons, and of the casting out of many of them. The Spirit speaketh expressly, “that, in the latter days, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed
 “to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils||: the things
 “which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils,
 “and not to God§.”

From the testimonies of the heathen already quoted, it appears, that they offered sacrifices to evil spirits, or daemons, in order to avert their anger, or procure their favour, if they had any; this practice, the word of God every where, and the passages above quoted, evidently condemn.

But as they acknowledged and worshipped good angels, or daemons, as well as bad, is there no distinction to be made? does the Apostle disapprove of the worship of both? The holy scriptures make no distinction; they condemn both, as impious, without any exception.

* Lev. xvii. 7. † Εθυσαν δαίμονις. Deut. xxxii. 17.
 ‡ xii. 31. || 1 Tim. iv. 1. Διδασκαλίας δαιμονίων. § 1 Cor.
 x. 20.

Both the Prophet and Apostle declare, “that they offered sacrifices to devils, and not to God.” As they had evidently some knowledge of God, and of his will, did they entirely neglect him? did they pay him no respect, nor offer him any sacrifice? No, they intended to honour him; and, according to their system, behoved to worship him by means of these daemons, especially the good ones, to whom they offered sacrifices: but, as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, as they all entertained wrong notions of him, the service which they addressed to him, was not paid to the true God, but to a fiction of their own imaginations: as they had relinquished, and, in a great measure, lost the knowledge of his will, the only rule by which he could be worshipped, they could not, in all respects, intend well: and, supposing them to have intended ever so sincerely, to have worshipped him according to their own modes, the service intended him, contrary to his will, was no service to him, it was a dishonour to him, and a sin in the worshippers; for, if good intentions could have answered the purpose, could they have rendered that right and acceptable, which was wrong and hateful, they might then have sanctified, or now might sanctify, the most horrid crimes, the most opposite to the nature of God, and the most destructive to mankind. “If our gospel be hid,” says the Apostle, “it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*.”

“Wherein, *i. e.* in sin, in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the PRINCE of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience†.” If, then, it was by the

* 2 Cor. iv. 3.

† Eph. ii. 2.

influence of Satan, or of wicked daemons, that the heathen, though by no means without their own fault, lost so far the knowledge of God, and of his will; if, by his direction, they adopted such objects of worship, and offered such sacrifices, *v. g.* human creatures, they worshipped, in effect, not God, but him, or them, under whose influence they worshipped.

Thus the words of the Apostle may be understood in the most unlimited sense, they sacrificed to daemons, and that of the worst kind; all their religious services were performed under the influence of these daemons; and, in no respect, did they offer proper worship to the true God: but this I leave to the determination of the learned and pious reader.

The advocates for the knowledge of God, by the light of nature only, ought to be interested equally with us, to shew, that the heathen, in every age, have known God, and his will, in some degree. According to our system, with regard to tradition, it is easy to account for their deviations from the right knowledge of God, and of their duty. But if, according to them, every man in his senses, must, upon viewing the works of nature, immediately discern their Creator, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, his government of the world, and so many branches of their duty, how could they possibly have lost that knowledge, or degenerated in their conduct so far, as the accounts given by themselves, evidently shew they did? How such an opinion can be made to accord with historical facts, we leave those who hold it to determine.

B O O K II.

P A R T I. S E C T. I.

BEFORE I proceed to adduce, from heathen writers, evidence that the most useful knowledge they were possessed of, especially concerning God and religion, was derived from tradition, it may be proper to premise a few observations, in order to pave the way for these quotations.

1. Then, the heathen made great progress in almost every branch of knowledge, excepting in that of religion only; they attained to a pitch of perfection, which, if equalled, has not been excelled by the moderns in all kinds of writing, in history, poetry, and oratory, in painting, sculpture, &c. whereas, when they began to explain the subjects of religion, the nature of God, his perfections, and will, and the duties which they owed to him; when they discoursed of superior beings, of the souls of men, and of a future state, they soon “darkened counsel by words without knowledge;” they bewildered themselves in their own speculations; and, by their means, the rest who depended upon their instructions, (if indeed philosophers condescended to teach the vulgar) were involved in darkness; this holds true, not only of these corners where Barbarism and ignorance of the arts prevailed, but of the politest nations, and most celebrated times of heathenism; idolatry abounded, or, perhaps, always increased; even vices were consecrated, and their votaries we cannot suppose to have been virtuous; all of them

became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Since, then, they improved so much in every branch of science, except in religion alone, what must have been the cause of this difference?

Supposing, but not granting, that language, letters, and the principles of all the arts, were the inventions of men; these principles, when discovered, were perfectly adapted to their capacities, and an immediate relief to their necessities; therefore succeeding ages would naturally make improvements in them, which accordingly we find was the case; but, as their speculations on religious subjects, were, for the most part, so dark, so unintelligible, so unprofitable, and inconsistent with truth, it seems to follow, that these subjects were not so obvious as the former, nor so easily comprehended; and that it was not by reason unassisted, that they were first discovered; for if men, by the light of nature, without tradition or revelation, had discovered, that there was a God of such and such perfections, that man was endowed with a soul, and that that soul was immortal, they would have very readily, and naturally, improved, and not declined, as, in fact, they did, in the knowledge of them.

2. After the gospel began to be propagated, the knowledge of God, and of man's duty, was diffused, not among the professors of Christianity only, but also among its enemies: by means of this revelation, the ploughman, or mechanic, knows, or may know, more of God, and of his duty, than the most renowned philosopher in the heathen world, who depended upon mere tradition, greatly corrupted by his own reason. Not to mention Cicero and Seneca, who flourished, the one a little before, and the other soon after our Saviour, and may have received information, the first from the Old Testament, translated

into Greek, and the last from the gospel, which then began to spread: there was established, in the second century, a school in Alexandria, the masters and disciples of which adopted into their system, from the tenets of all sects, Christian and heathen, what they thought best. In this school were bred some of the fathers of the church, and some of its keenest adversaries; the first tinged in their principles, and hurt by vain philosophy, and the last improved by Christianity; of the last, I shall mention Hierocles only, who, about the beginning of the fourth century, wrote against Christianity; he also wrote a commentary on the Golden verses of Pythagoras. Before Christ came, the Stoics confounded God with matter, or the world, and considered the soul as a part of God, which resolves at last into its original principles. The Academics held, that all things were uncertain. And the Epicureans dismissed God out of the world*. Plato, chief among philosophers, is often obscure, where perspicuity is necessary; and, by representing God as defective in certain virtues, fails in some very essential points, *v. g.* among others, in accounting for the original of evil†. He was of opinion, either that evil arose from the nature of matter, or from some malignant principle, which nature could not overcome. How unfavourable to religion such a notion was, may easily be discerned; for, if moral evil arose from matter, or an evil principle, and not from the abuse of human liberty, why should men attempt to resist what God could not prevent? or why should they be blamed for that which they could not possibly avoid? Thus a door was, in effect, o-

* Mosheim's Eccl. Hist.

† Stillingfleet's Origin. Sacrae.

pened to vice, and the motives to virtue, in a great measure, deprived of their force.

Whereas Hierocles deduces moral evil from the abuse of human liberty: “Most men, says he, are vitious, van-
“quished by human affections, and their heart corrupt-
“ed by their inclination to the earth; so that this evil a-
“rises from themselves, because they have voluntarily
“fled from God, and separated themselves from his so-
“ciety, which they enjoyed, while they were in the
“pure light*.”

In the writings of the antient heathen, oaths are introduced upon almost all occasions? How often does even Plato transgress in this instance? whereas Hierocles shews, in a masterly manner, how pernicious the custom of common swearing is, and points out the means of avoiding it: “The best method of preserving reverence for an
“oath, is not to swear frequently, nor rashly, nor upon
“trivial occasions, nor for a supplement in conversation,
“or in confirmation of what is said†. By an habit of
“swearing, one may easily fall into perjury; but he who
“seldom uses, most readily keeps an oath‡.”

The New Testament contains a clear exposition of the Old; by the New, the truths of revelation were widely spread; under the Old, they were confined within a narrower channel, or communicated in a more uncertain

* Οἱ γὰρ πλείοι κακοί, καὶ τῆς δινητῆς προσπάθειας ἡτῆς, καὶ φρε-
νόλαβεις ὑπὸ τῆς εἰς γῆν κενσεως γενομένοι, ὥς καὶ τὸ παρ' ἑαυτῶν
τὸ κακὸν εἶναι, διὰ τὸ βεβλήθηναι φυγεῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, καὶ ἀπομερίσσει αὐ-
τὸς τῆς τῆς οὐμιλίας, ἥς εὐτυχὲν ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρὰ διαγούτες.

† Μελετῇ δ' ἀριστη τὸ τηρεῖν τὸ περὶ αὐτὸν νῖζ. ὀρκὸν σεβας, τὸ μὴ
πυκνῶς, μηδὲ ὥς εὐτυχέ, χρῆσθαι τῷ ὀρκῷ, μηδὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς παρατυχεσι,
μηδὲ εἰς ἀναπληρωσιν λόγου, μηδὲ εἰς πεισῶσιν διηγημάτων.

‡ Καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῇ συνεχείᾳ τὸ ὀμνυεῖν, ῥαδίως ἀν' μεταπείσοι τις εἰς
ἐπιτορχίαν, φειδοῖ δὲ τηρήσις ἐπεται.

manner; the knowledge of the modern heathens is distinct and clear; that of the antient, in comparifon, imperfect in many refpects: the modern, we are certain, derived the knowledge, by which they improved their philofophy, from the Old and New Testaments: and may we not infer, that the antients received any knowledge they had of moral or religious truths, if not directly from the Old Testament, at leaft from tradition, the fource of which was fupernatural revelation?

3. It has been proved, by the learned, that the Latins derived their letters from the Greeks; and the Greeks acknowledge, that they received theirs, by Cadmus, from Phoenicia; the Phoenicians, fays Herodotus*, introduced into Greece, befides many doctrines, letters, which were the firft, in his opinion, which the Greeks had; thefe letters all the Phoenicians made ufe of; but, in procefs of time, together with the found, their form was altered; the Ionians firft received them, and acknowledged their origin, by calling them Phoenician letters. Our author faw an infcription, in Cadmean letters, on fome tripods, in the temple of Apollo, in Thebes of Boeotia. In another book†, he fays, that the Greeks received from the Egyptians their religious rites, and, from time to time, the names of their gods; and that two Phoenician women, priefteffes, the one in Lybia, and the other in Greece, instituted oracles. Diodorus Siculus obferves, that, before the reign of Amafis, a king of Egypt, ftrangers were not admitted into that kingdom; but that afterwards many went thither for inftruction, viz. Orpheus, Mufoeus, Melampus, Dedalus, Homer, Lycurgus, Pythagoras, Eudoxus, Democri-

* Terpficor. Lat. Trans. † Euterpe.

tus, Solon, Plato. This fact, with regard to the travels of learned men, from Greece into the East, particularly into Egypt, is attested by so many antient writers, that it can admit of no doubt.

Beside, the knowledge, then, which the Pelasgi, the original inhabitants of Greece, were possessed of, and which they communicated to their posterity; beside the instruction derived from Cadmus, and his companions, who were all Phoenicians; from Orpheus, Solon and others, who had travelled into foreign parts, it is evident, that, in later times, some philosophers, who have made the greatest figure, such as Plato, have travelled, and that at such a period, as afforded the best means of improvement in theological knowledge; that was, when many of the Jews were settled in Egypt, and in the kingdoms around, and when the Old Testament, as some suppose, had been translated into Greek*.

S E C T. II.

FROM the variety of evidence formerly adduced, beside the presumptive arguments now mentioned, it will evidently appear, that the heathen writers, if they were in any measure guided by truth in their writings, will be found to confess, that any knowledge they have had, relating to God, and to matters of religion, was derived principally from tradition; but, as the bulk of mankind are of opinion, that the knowledge which men have concerning these matters, took its rise, not from tradition, but from nature, that opinion, it may be supposed, prevailed generally through many ages back; and, therefore, it is not to be expected, that we can produce from heathen

* Stanley's Lives.

writers any direct evidence, that such knowledge was derived from tradition. Their writings are modern, and far removed from the original source of tradition; and, even of these, it is but a part which has reached us; and, of these, it is but a small number which I have had opportunity of consulting.

Besides, the doctrines which the Greek philosophers were taught by strangers, they, for the most part, were so disguised, that the originals can hardly be discerned; and this they did, partly, to accommodate them to the taste of their countrymen, or the system of religion which then prevailed; and, particularly, that they might be honoured, as inventors of those things which they were taught by others. To all of them, what Cicero says, may justly be applied: “Many things in our laws are derived
“ from them, *v. g.* the Pythagoreans (therefore not from
“ themselves) which I pass, lest what we are believed to
“ have invented, we should seem to have acquired by the
“ help of others*.”

I shall, however, quote some instances of tradition, and of the opinions of the antients, in the following order:

First, with regard to the origin of language, and arts, especially those which were necessary for the preservation of human life.

Then concerning religion, viz. the immortality of the soul, and the being of God. And,

In the last place, I shall point out some observations deducible from the passages quoted.

* *Tuscul. Quaest. Lib. IV.* Multa etiam sunt in nostris institutis, ducta ab illis, quae praetereo, ne ea, quae peperisse ipsi putamur, aliunde didicisse videamur.

In the first place, then, as to language and arts. In Cratylus*, Socrates acknowledges, that the Greek names of fire and water†, are not of Greek origin, but derived from the Barbarians, he supposes from the Phrygians, and so of wisdom, evil, and grief‡. “When we come, “says he, to words which are simple, we may consider “them as the elements, and inquire no further concern- “ing their original; or, as tragedians, when they are “difficulted, introduce the gods, we may say that the “first names were framed by the gods, or that we re- “ceived them from the Barbarians; for the Barbarians are “more antient than us; or that, by reason of their anti- “quity, we cannot understand them.”

Cratylus is of opinion, that it required powers, greater than human, to impose, with propriety, the first names. Socrates derives the name of Apollo, from the circumstance of his delivering men from evils||. “Some, says “he, not understanding this, have dreaded that name, “as importing ruin or destruction.” This will naturally suggest to the reader a passage in holy writ: “And “they had a king over them, which is the angel of the “bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is “Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name A- “pollyon§.

Some god, or divine man, such as Theuth in Egypt is reported to have been, perceiving that voice or sound was indefinite, expressed it by letters, and formed these into words**. “Who first gave names to all things, “which Pythagoras considered as the effect of the highest

* Plato. † Πυρ κὶ υδωρ. ‡ Σοφία, κακόν, αλγυνδών.

|| Απολλων from Απολλυων, or Απολλεων. § Rev. ix. 11. Απολλυων. ** Plat. Philebus, Επειδὴ φωνὴν ἀπειρον κατένοησεν, εἴτε τις θεός, εἴτε κὶ θεῖος ἀνδρῶπιος, &c.

“ wisdom? or who collected men together, and united
 “ them in society? or who limited and expressed, by a
 “ few letters, the sounds of the voice, which appeared to
 “ be infinite? These were all great men *.”

In Politicus, mention is made of a great revolution which had happened in the world, and of the consequences of it; of which some were, that men being forsaken by the daemon which had the charge of them, were torn by wild beasts; that, during these first times, *i. e.* after the revolution, they were ignorant of arts, and the earth ceased to produce, spontaneously, food for men; nor did they now know how to procure it, as they had been formerly urged by no necessity; by this means they were reduced to great straits; wherefore these gifts were bestowed by the gods, together with necessary instruction, viz. fire by Prometheus, the arts by Vulcan and his wife, feeds and fruits by others; and whatever things were necessary or convenient for the life of man, were supplied by these †.

In the third book of laws, the Athenian, one of the speakers, says, “ Do you think that the antient reports
 “ have any truth in them ‡?”

Clineas. What reports? *Athen.* That great numbers of men have been destroyed by deluges, diseases, and many other evils; so that very few of mankind remained,

* Tuscul. Quaest. Lib. I. Qui primus, quod summae sapientiae Pythagorae visum est, omnibus rebus imposuit nomina? Aut qui dissipatos homines congregavit et ad societatem vitae convocavit? Aut qui sonos vocis qui infiniti videbantur, paucis litterarum notis terminavit? Omnes magni.

† Plato. in Polit. Πῦρ μὲν παρὰ Προμηθεῶς, τέχναι δὲ παρ’ Ἡφαίστου, καὶ τῆς συντέχνης, σπέρματα δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ φυτὰ παρ’ ἄλλων καὶ παντὸς ὅσους τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον συγκατεσκευακεν, ἐκ τούτων γεγονέν.

‡ Ἀρ’ ἐν ὑμῖν οἱ παλαιοὶ λόγοι ἀληθείαν ἔχειν τινὰ δοκεῖσιν; Idem.

Clin. This is very credible. *Athen.* Let us consider the devastation occasioned by the deluge. *Clin.* What may we infer from that? *Athen.* That those who escaped that disaster, were shepherds upon the tops of mountains; that iron, brass, and other metals, overwhelmed, would be lost; that any tools which remained on the mountains would soon be worn out, and could not be replaced, till men recovered the art of working metals: the potters and weavers arts stand in no need of iron; God gave to men these two arts, that, when reduced to such straits, they might spring up and multiply again*. Agriculture was not the effect of art, but of nature, by the assistance of God†. They were great men who invented letters, but still greater who discovered corn, clothes, houses, the civilizing of mankind, and defence against wild beasts‡.

2. I shall, in the next place, quote some passages relating to the immortality of the soul.

Solon, when he conversed with the priests of Egypt, found, that neither he, nor any Greek, understood any of these things, *i. e.* of antiquity, when he had asked the priests concerning some antient things, one of the oldest of them said, “Solon, Solon, ye Greeks are always children, *i. e.* in knowledge, having in you no antient opinion, by means of antient tradition||.”

* Τὸ τῶ τῶ τεχνῶ θεὸς ἔδωκε πορίζειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἵν' ὅποτε εἰς τὴν τοιαυτὴν ἀπορίαν ἐλθοίεν, ἔχοι βλαστὴν καὶ ἐπιδόσιν το τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος. Idem.

† Idem, Ἡ χάρις ξυμπασῆς γειοργία, ἔ γὰρ τεχνῶ, ἀλλὰ φύσει κατὰ θεόν.

‡ Tuscul. Quæst. Lib. I. Etiam superiores, qui fruges, qui vestitum, qui tecta, qui cultum vitæ, qui præsidia contra feras invenerunt.

|| Plat. Timæus, Οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἐχετε, δι' ἀρχαίαν ἀκοὴν παλαιὰν δόξην. A proof, that if the Greeks were taught by the

Plato, in his apology for Socrates, represents him as saying, “ that, in death, one of these two things will happen, either that the person dead will lose all sense, and therefore that death will be a sleep without dreams, or if, as is reported *, there will be a change or trans- lation of the soul from one place to another; in either case, death will be an advantage; those in that state, *i. e.* in another world, are not only happier than those who are here; but if what is said be true †, if they are immortal, ye judges ought to entertain good hope concerning death,”

Socrates tells his friends, “ that he hoped the dead enjoy something; and that, as it was said of old ‡, it will fare better with the good than with the bad. There is a certain antient tradition, which we remember ||, that they go thither, *i. e.* that souls go into another world.”

We ought always to hearken to the antient and sacred traditions, which intimate to us, that the soul is immortal §. We may have the best authorities for the confirmation of that opinion, which you wish to establish, *i. e.* concerning the immortality of the soul, which, in all causes deserves, and is wont to have great weight; and, in the first place, we have all the antients, who, the nearer they were to the origin of mankind, and of the

Egyptians, the Egyptians derived their knowledge of antient truths from tradition.

* Κατα τα λεγομενα.

† Ειπερ τα λεγομενα αληθη εστιν.

‡ Καὶ ὡς περ γε καὶ παλαι λεγεται. Plat. Phæde.

|| Παλαιος μὲν ἐν εἰς τις λόγος ἔτος, ἔ μνημεθα. Ibid.

§ Πειθεσθαι δὲ ἔτῳς αἰ χρῆ τοις παλαιοῖς τε καὶ ἱεροῖς, λόγοις, οἱ δὲ μνησκιν ἡμῖν, ἀθανατον ψυχὴν εἶναι.

Platonis Epist. ad Dionis Amicos.

gods, the more clearly, perhaps, they discerned the truth*.

Aristotle, in his book concerning the soul, speaking of its immortality, says, "Our opinion on this subject
" is so antient, that no body knows its commencement,
" nor who first entertained it; it has prevailed from the
" beginning†."

Here follows an abridged account of a great revolution: "The sun and stars arose where they now set, and
" set where they now rise. Under the reign of Saturn,
" men sprang from the earth, and were not descend-
" ed from one another. God himself conducted the
" earth in its motion; after certain revolutions, he left
" it to itself; and, by a motion of its own, it moved the
" contrary way. With that revolution, great changes
" have happened among us and other animals: men for-
" merly renewed their age; youth, by a certain rotation,
" succeeded old age. This was handed down to us from
" the first of our ancestors, who lived soon after the first
" revolution‡. At first God carefully directed the whole
" circumvolution, as the guardian gods now rule parti-
" cular districts. The beasts were not wild; none of them

* Auctoribus quidem ad istam sententiam, quam vis obtinere, uti optimis possumus, quod in omnibus causis, et debet, et solet valere plurimum, et primum quidem, omni antiquitate, quae quo propius aberat ab ortu, et divina progenie, hoc melius, ea fortasse, quae erant vera, cernebat Tuscul. Quaest. Lib. I.

† Καὶ ταυτ' ἕως ἀρχαία, καὶ παλαιὰ διατελεῖ νενομισμένα παρ' ἡμῖν ὥστε το παραπαν ἕδεις οἶδει, ἕτε τε χρόνῳ τῇ ἀρχῇ, ἕτε τον δευτα πρωτον, ἀλλὰ τον απειρον αἰῶνα τυγχανουσι διὰ τελεος ἕως νενομισμένα. Plutarch de Consolatione ad Apollonium.

‡ Platonis Polit. Απεμνημονευστο δὲ ὑπο τῶν ἡμετέρων προγονων τῶν πρωτῶν, οἱ τελευτῶσι μὲν τῇ πρωτῇ περιφορᾷ, τον εἰς χρόνον ἐγείτονεν.

“ devoured another. There was no property of wives or
 “ children. The earth produced liberally to all. Then
 “ men conversed with one another, and with beasts.
 “ When the revolution happened, the earth-born race
 “ perished; the Governor of the universe left the helm,
 “ and retired to his own watch-tower; but, observing
 “ the confusion which ensued, he resumed the direc-
 “ tion, and rendered the world immortal*.”

3. Concerning religion, and the being of God: “What
 “ they, viz. the remains of mankind after the flood, heard
 “ concerning gods and men, they believed to be true,
 “ and lived accordingly†. There is an antient tradition
 “ handed down to all men from their fathers, that of
 “ God, and by God, all things are made for us‡.”

“ The gift of the gods to men, as appears evidently to
 “ me, was sent down from the gods, by means of a cer-
 “ tain Prometheus, with a very bright fire, and the an-
 “ tients, who were better than us, and dwelt nearer to
 “ the gods, have transmitted to us this tradition||. All

* Idem. ibid † Platonis Polit. Περι θεων τε και ανθρωπων
 τα λεγομενα, αληθη νομιζοντες, εζων κατὰ ταυτα.

‡ Aristot. De Mundo. Ως εκ θεου, τα παντα, και δια θεου ημιν
 συνεστηκεν.

|| Plat. Philebus. Θεων μεν εις ανθρωπους δοσιν, ως γε καταφαι-
 νεται εμοι ποθεν εκ θεων ερριπη δια τινος Προμηθεως, αμα φανωτατω, τινι
 πυρι, και οι μεν παλαιοι, κρειττονες ημων, και εγλυτερω θεων οικοντες,
 ταυτην φημιν παρεδωσαν. Now, whether these words, THIS
 TRADITION, refer to the gift of the gods, mentioned imme-
 diately before, or to the subject following, it is not easy to de-
 termine: the words immediately following those already quot-
 ed, are, ως εξ ενος μεν και πολλων, οντων των αει λεγομενων ειναι,
 περας δε και απειριαν εν εαυτοις συμφυτον εχοντων, which may,
 perhaps, be thus rendered, “ That things or beings, which are
 “ said always to exist, and having naturally in themselves finite,
 “ and infinite, consist of ONE, and MANY.” Whether the au-
 thor, by these words, ONE, and MANY, means things created,

“ the wise men agree in this, that Mind or Reason is
 “ the King of heaven and earth to us*. Shall we say,
 “ then, that an irrational and accidental force governs
 “ all things, and what is called this universe? Or, on
 “ the contrary, as our fore-fathers † have affirmed, that
 “ MIND, and a certain admirable Wisdom, orders and
 “ rules all things? *Proterchus*, one of the speakers, an-
 “ swers Socrates, who had proposed the question, thus:
 “ To say, that Mind orders, or has ‡ formed all those
 “ things, is suitable to the appearance of the world. *So-*
 “ *crates*. It is not a groundless observation, but agree-
 “ able to what was said of old||, that Mind always rules
 “ the universe§.”

In the case of injustice, the cause of which he pre-
 tends to defend, says Adimantus, “ How shall we be hid
 “ from the gods, it will be asked? If they exist not, or
 “ take no care of human affairs, we need give our-
 “ selves no concern; if they exist and watch over men,
 “ we have known, or heard nothing of them, but from

or the powers and qualities of these things metaphysically ex-
 pressed: or, whether he means by them, one God, and the pri-
 mitive matter of which all things here were made, or ONE God,
 and the ideas of things in his mind, as the exemplars of all
 things, I must leave to the determination of the reader. Or,
 if the word TRADITION refers to the gift of the gods, what
 that gift is, is expressed at the distance of a few lines after:
 “ The gods, then, as I have said, gave to us the power of con-
 “ templating, and learning, and also of teaching one another.”
 αἱ μὲν γὰρ θεοὶ (ὅπερ εἶπον) ἔτασαν ἡμῖν παρεδόσαν σκοπεῖν, καὶ μανθάνειν, καὶ διδάσκειν ἀλλήλοις.

* Idem. Ibid. Νῦν βασιλεὺς ἡμῖν ἔργα καὶ γῆς.

† Ibid. Οἱ προσθεν ἡμῶν.

‡ Διακόσμεν. Ibid.

|| Τοῖς παλαιῶν ἀποφθναμένοις. Id. ibid.

§ Τοῦ παντὸς νῦν ἀρχεῖ.

“ traditions and the poets, who treat of their genealogies *. We have accounts in writing, partly in verse, and partly in prose; the most antient speak of the gods, how the heavens and other things were made, &c. †

“ Mind is more antient than body; to it the formation of all things belong ‡. It is not lawful to neglect the gods, when the tradition concerning all these is evident, and confirmed by reason ||. This most antient opinion, the origin of which cannot be determined, has been communicated from theologians and lawgivers, to poets and philosophers, which has obtained firm, constant, and general belief, as appears not by writings only, and reports, but also by the sacred mysteries and sacrifices, both among Barbarians and Greeks; that the universe is not governed, or was not raised up, without a Mind, and Reason, and a Governor §.”

* Plato. De Repub. Lib. II. Οὐκ ἄλλοθεν τοι αὐτὸς ἴσμεν, ἢ ἀκηκοαμεν, ἢ ἐκ τε τῶν λόγων, καὶ τῶν γενεαλογησαντων Ποιητῶν.

† Idem. De Repub. Lib. X. Εἰσι ἡμῖν ἐν γραμμασι λόγοι κειμενοί, οἳ μὲν ἐν τισὶ μέτροις, οἳ δὲ ἀνευ μέτρων, λεγοντες περὶ θεῶν οἱ μὲν παλαιότατοι, ὡς γέγονεν ἢ πρώτη φύσις ἔσαν, τῶν τε ἄλλων.

‡ Τὸτο δὲ ἐστὶ σχεδόν, ὃ μόνῳ πλατίνειν, καὶ δημιουργεῖν προσήκει. Ibid.

|| Καθαφανὲς γενομένης τῆς πάντων αὐτῶν κατὰ τρόπον λεγομένης φήμης εὐτυχές. Ibid.

§ Παλαιὸς αὕτη κατείσιν ἐκ θεολογῶν, καὶ νομοθετῶν, εἰς τε ποιητὰς καὶ φιλοσόφους δόξα, τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀδеспόρον εἶχουσα, τὴν δὲ πρὸς ἰσχυραὶν, καὶ δυσεξάλειπτον, ἔκ ἐν λόγοις μόνον, ἔδῃ ἐν φήμασι, ἀλλὰ ἐν τε τέλεταις, ἐν τε θυσίαις, καὶ βαρβάροις, καὶ Ἑλλήσι πολλαχῶς περιφερομένην, ὡς ἔκ ἀνῶν, καὶ ἀλογον, καὶ ἀκυβερνητον, ἀμείνεται τῷ αὐτοματῷ, το Παν. Plutarch De Isid. et Osirid. Our author, it is true, immediately introduces his doctrine concerning an evil principle, as founded, in his opinion, upon the same antient and universal testimony. The opinion which many entertained with regard to an evil principle, took its rise, no doubt, from tradition corrupted, and from the observations which men made

“ Were there men who always lived under the earth
 “ in good and splendid abodes, set off with pictures, and
 “ furnished with all these things with which those a-
 “ bound, who are accounted happy, and had never ap-
 “ peared above the earth, BUT HAD HEARD BY RE-
 “ PORT, that there are certain gods, supposing that in
 “ some after period, by the opening of the earth, they
 “ should escape from these secret abodes, immediately,
 “ upon seeing the earth, seas, and heavens, the beauty,
 “ the motions, the revolutions and order in all these,
 “ they would conclude both that there are gods, and that
 “ these so great works are their works *.”

“ One should preserve the rites of his family, and fa-
 “ thers, that is (since antiquity approaches nearest to the
 “ gods) a man should maintain religion, because it is
 “ handed down, as it were, from the gods †. When the
 “ Athenians consulted Apollo, what rites of religion they
 “ should retain, the answer was, These observed by their

concerning natural and moral evils which abounded in the
 world. If this was the case, tradition, with regard to the o-
 rigin of evil, and concerning God, as the former and ruler of
 the world, must have universally prevailed, before the opinion
 concerning an evil principle, as it came by degrees to be under-
 stood, was adopted by any man.

* Cicero. De Nat. Deor. quotes this passage from Aristotle,
 Si essent, inquit, qui sub terra habitavissent, bonis, et illustribus
 domiciliis, quae essent ornata signis, atque picturis, instructa-
 que rebus iis omnibus, quibus abundant ii, qui beati putantur,
 nec tamen exissent unquam supra terram, ACCIPISSENT autem
 FAMA et AUDITIONE, esse quoddam numen, et vim deorum,
 deinde aliquo tempore, patefactis terrae faucibus, ex illis ab-
 ditis sedibus, evadere in haec loca, quae nos incolimus, atque
 exire potuissent, &c.

† Idem. De Leg. Lib. II. Jam ritus familiae, patrumque
 servare, id est, (quoniam antiquitas proxime accedit ad Deos)
 a Diis quasi traditam religionem tueri.

“ancestors; whither, when they had come again, and
 “said, that the manner of their ancestors had been often
 “changed, and asked, which of the various manners they
 “should copy? the answer was, The best; and surely
 “there is reason for reckoning that most ancient, and
 “nearest to God, which is best*.”

S E C T. III.

HAVING quoted several passages, to my purpose, from the most celebrated of the heathen writers, I shall now make some observations upon them; and,

I. The discovery of those arts which were necessary for the preservation of man's life, and for the association of mankind, viz. the invention of names to things, of corns, of agriculture, clothes, and the like, appeared to the learned among the heathen, so difficult, that they ascribed it to God, or to men inspired by God; and this their opinion was founded upon tradition.

1. As to language, or the imposition of names on things; the first words which man heard was from God†; and although he could not understand the meaning of the words which were spoken to him, unless the things so named had been either pointed out by some visible, external means, or the knowledge of the words communicated by inspiration; in either of these ways, it was easy for

* Idem. De Leg. Lib. II. Cum consulerent Athenienses Apollinem Pythium quas potissimum religiones tenerent, oraculum editum est, “Eas quae essent in more majorum. quo cum iterum venissent. majorumque morem dixissent saepe esse mutatum, quaesivissentque, quem morem potissimum sequerentur, e variis respondet, “Optimum.” Et profecto ita est, “ut id habendum sit antiquissimum, et Deo proximum, quod sit optimum.”

† See Gen. i. 28, 29, 30. ii. 16.

God to impart to Adam, and to his wife, the meaning of the words which they heard.

It is said, “that God brought the beasts to Adam, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever he called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” The sacred history, especially between the creation and the flood is evidently short. What time elapsed between the creation of man and his fall, is nowhere mentioned; therefore we are under no necessity of supposing that it was very short, or that every transaction, during that period, is particularly mentioned. Adam having, in the first place, heard God giving names to many things, and understood him; as he had, probably, daily intercourse with God, in his innocent state, and, by that means, would improve in his knowledge of language; and, as he had opportunity of conversing with his wife concerning the things which they heard named, he would, by that habit, naturally acquire a facility in naming new objects when they occurred.

Besides, the passage in the original may leave room to suppose, that though Adam gave names to all the beasts, he did not name them all at once, but only one, or a few of them, at that time, and the rest afterwards, as he had opportunity. The words, literally rendered, run thus, *and brought*, i. e. *God brought*; there is nothing in the original for *them*; we may supply its place with *it*: “Un- to Adam, to see what he would call it, and whatsoever Adam called it, that was the name of it, and Adam gave names to every living creature*.” God, as the great master, having taught Adam many names of things, seems here to try what proficiency his scholar had made,

* Shuckford's Connect. Vol. IV.

he brought to him a beast, or a few beasts, to see what he would call them.

2. As to corns, or plants and fruits, “the Lord God made the earth, and the heavens, and every plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew*,” *i. e.* he produced them in the earth in a state of perfection, and all at once, not by a gradual process, as he has done ever since. Now, that corn was of that number, we may take for granted; and that God instructed man in the use of it, may appear probable, because the cultivation of it seems to have been necessary for its preservation; because, if Adam stood not in immediate need of it, it would soon become to him, as it has hitherto been to his posterity, a necessary mean of life; and because God, in teaching man what food he was to eat, said to him, “I have given you every herb bearing seed,” among which was corn, “to you it shall be for meat†.”

3. As to agriculture, or the cultivation of the ground; “the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden,” &c. Here is a duty pointed out, the dressing of the garden, including, probably, the breaking up, or digging of the ground. If this was one end proposed, how could he accomplish it, without some instruction concerning the instruments necessary in order to it? After the fall, God said to Adam‡, “Curst is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;” which includes labour in digging the ground. We are not to conclude from this, that Adam had no labour in his innocent state; but that after he sin-

* Gen. ii. 4.

† i. 29.

‡ iii. 17.

ned, the ground became either less fruitful, or abounded more in noxious weeds; and, therefore, that it would require more labour, and greater pains in the cultivation of it. The man must have had some idea of the curse denounced; and, therefore, of the labour requisite in cultivating the ground, and, of course, of the instruments, however simple, necessary for that end, whether they were branches of trees, or sharp stones, or whatever they were.

4. As to clothes, I need quote only a single passage*: “And, unto Adam and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” From all these particulars, it is evident, that God gave to man the first principles of all the sciences, at that time necessary for him, which, however simple at the beginning, a sense of want, the love of pleasure, and of novelty, would naturally prompt mankind to improve.

II. Saturn’s reign is described as peaceful; men sprung out of the ground; the beasts were not wild; men conversed with beasts, and then there happened a great revolution.

1. As to Saturn, it appears that men of renown, whose history was conveyed down by tradition, after the commencement of idolatry, were considered as gods: and afterwards men, who deserved well of the public, were some time after their death deified, called, in their life-time, or after their death, by the name of some antient god: hence so many Joves†.

Says a speaker, in one of Plutarch’s dialogues‡, “If we design some daemons by the names given to the gods, it is not to be wondered at; for each of them

* Gen. iii. 21.
Oracul. Defect.

† Cicero. De Nat. Deorum.

‡ De

“ loves to be called by the name of that God with whom
 “ he is ranked, and from whom he received his power
 “ and honour; and, among us, one is named Jovius,
 “ or called by the name of Jove; another by that of Mi-
 “ nerva; another of Apollo; and another of Bacchus:
 “ of these, some are, by accident, well designed; but
 “ many of them have nothing resembling the gods but
 “ the names.” Says Cicero*, “ It may be understood,
 “ that, in most states, in order to animate men with va-
 “ lour, for the defence of their country, the memory of
 “ brave men was consecrated with the honour of the im-
 “ mortal gods.”

Many persons thus called by one name, and a variety
 of characters and actions belonging to all of them, attri-
 buted often to one, makes it difficult to distinguish any
 one among such a number, or to shew what person it
 was, to which such a particular name was first given:
 however, from many particulars in the history of Saturn,
 it seems probable, that, among the heathen, Noah was *the*
 first who was designed by that name†, or, perhaps, Adam,
 whom, in process of time, they might very readily con-
 found with Noah, like men, who viewing two objects
 in a line, are apt to consider them as one only; or both
 Adam and Noah may be included.

One character of Saturn's reign is, that it was peaceful;
 Adam and his wife, in their state of innocence, enjoyed
 great peace and happiness; and Noah and his family, ge-
 nerally speaking, after the flood.

Another, that the earth brought forth men; that the
 earth, spontaneously, produced trees, beasts, and men,
 was an opinion that prevailed much; especially in E-

* De Nat. Deor.

† Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac.

gypt*, the source of which opinion, or tradition, was, very probably, the following historical fact: “And the
“Lord God formed the man of the dust of the ground,
“and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life†.”

Then men conversed with beasts; “God brought the
“beasts to Adam, to SEE what he would call them‡.”
Noah was commanded to take into the ark, with him,
beasts of all kinds, in order to preserve them alive||. And
Eve and the serpent conversed with one another§.

About that time there happened a great revolution,
followed with the most important consequences, embell-
lished and set off among the heathen with many fabu-
lous circumstances; such was that occasioned by the fall
of Adam, and that by the deluge in the days of Noah.

III. From these few quotations it appears :

1. That the heathen received, by tradition, their reli-
gion, the knowledge of their gods, and the manner of
worshipping them; therefore any knowledge they had of
the truth, viz. of God, and of his will, disguised under
the rites of idolatry, they must have received by the same
channel; that is, by tradition.

Again, if idolatry was a perversion of the true reli-
gion, first more simple, and then more complex; they
who first began to corrupt religion, and who therefore
must have had, in some measure, the knowledge of God,
and of their duty, must have received that knowledge
from tradition also.

2. By tradition they were taught the doctrine of the
immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards
and punishments. This doctrine is one of the essential

* Diodor. Sicul. Lib. I. † Gen. ii. 7. ‡ ii. 10. || vi. 7.
§ iii. ch.

articles of religion; and since they attained to the knowledge of this by tradition, we have equal reason to believe, that they acquired, by the same means, the knowledge of the other articles, equally essential, viz. of the being of God, and of his will.

3. In one of the passages above quoted, it is acknowledged, that, in order to mens understanding that the works of nature are the works of God, they behoved, in the first place, to hear that there is a God. Accordingly Plato and Plutarch declare it to have been an antient and universal tradition, that the world is governed by a Mind or Reason, *i. e.* by God. .

Plato, in his Timaeus, describes the formation of the world, as the work of God, the knowledge of which fact he received from information; and Aristotle observes, that a tradition had been handed down, that of God, and by God, are all things. Therefore, since by tradition, according to their own acknowledgment, they understood that the world was framed and governed by God. And, since they grant, that they behoved to hear there was a God, in order to their knowing that the works of creation were his works, I hope I may be allowed to conclude, that it was by tradition also, that they understood there was a God, or Divine Being, whose works these were. And I am persuaded, that if all the arguments advanced, and quotations made hitherto in this work, are seriously considered, compared, and taken together, the impartial reader will, without hesitation, join with me in the same conclusion.

P A R T II.

S E C T. I.

I SHALL here point out, and endeavour to explain, some passages of scripture, which seem to suggest an objection to the doctrine which I have advanced; and if a few of the most material of these are explained to the reader's satisfaction, what is said on these, may serve as an exposition of all the rest of the same kind, Rom. i. 19, 20. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them; for the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

In the two first and part of the third chapters of this Epistle, the Apostle shews the necessity of salvation by the righteousness of Christ. In order the more clearly to evince this, he shews, that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, "had sinned, and were therefore under the curse."

But being aware, that where there is no law, or no knowledge of the law, or will of God, there is no transgression, he tells us in the verses which I have quoted, that God did communicate to the Gentiles the knowledge of himself; and, therefore, since they perverted that knowledge, and acted in a manner inconsistent with it, they were transgressors, and liable to punishment.

That which may be known of God; that is, his being, probably, his eternal power and Godhead, as in the following verse. No angel, however exalted, much less can any man perfectly comprehend the nature and attributes of God; but God, according to his good pleasure, hath made

himself, in a certain measure, known to all men, to Christians under the gospel most clearly, to the Jews less so; and even the heathen had opportunity of knowing so much of him as might have prevented their idolatry, and many other crimes of which they were guilty; they knew so much as rendered them liable, since they held the truth in unrighteousness, to the wrath of him who judgeth righteously; or the word rendered, *that which may be known*, may, perhaps, be translated, *the knowledge of God*. We find a word of the same kind translated, substantively, *the goodness of God**; and, in the passage before us, the words are, *to gnoston tu Theu*†, and may be rendered, *the knowledge of God*, or that which may be known of him, is manifest among or in them. If the knowledge of God was communicated to the Gentiles in general, that knowledge must have made some impression upon the mind of every individual: thus, ver. 15. they are said to “shew the work of the law written in their hearts;” therefore the word may be rendered IN, manifested in them.

But this interpretation may, strictly examined, amount to the same with the former; for knowledge must have a reference to the thing known; therefore the knowledge of God must imply the knowledge of his being, and some of his perfections, viz. as it is afterwards expressed, his eternal power and Godhead.

For God hath shewed, or revealed, or manifested it to them. The question here is, what is included in these words, God hath shewed it unto them? or by what means did he reveal himself to the Gentiles? There were two means by which he communicated to them the knowledge of himself, tradition, and the works of creation and

* Rom. ii. 4. Το Χρηστον τῷ Θεῷ. † Το γνωστον τῷ Θεῷ.

providence. If it be said, that we cannot reasonably suppose any more means intended by the word SHEWED, than we find in ver. 20. which appears to be an explication of it; and that verse seems to treat of the evidence arising from the works of God only, and not from tradition.

I answer, that the works of God, were not the only nor the primary means of imparting to men, the knowledge of him. This appears from the most antient writings, sacred and profane, and even from the nature of the thing: this I have endeavoured to prove in the preceding sections: and, in the exposition of this passage, I hope to make it appear, that the Apostle has an eye to tradition, or that he goes upon the supposition of it.

It is no unusual thing with this Apostle, to refer to tradition, when he speaks not directly of it*: “As certain
“also of your own poets have said; for we are also his
“offspring.” Of whom does the poet say, we are all the offspring? Of Jove. From whence did this poet, and all the heathen, derive this name, by which they called their supreme God? from Jehovah, the name of the true God among the Hebrews; and by what means did they become acquainted with that name? certainly by tradition.

Rom. i. 20. “For the invisible things of him, even
“his eternal power and Godhead, being understood,” or thought, or meditated upon, “are clearly seen by the
“things which are made.”

By these words, “from the creation of the world,” the Apostle evidently means, not any evidence arising from the works made, but the time only when they were

* Acts xvii. 28.

created. This expression is of the same import with these following*: “From the beginning of the creation, God
 “made them male and female. In those days shall be
 “affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the
 “creation, which God created†. All things continue
 “as they were from the beginning of the creation‡.”

Now, how did men from the creation, or from the time when the world was created, attain to the knowledge of God? did he conceal himself from their view, and leave them to their own natural anticipations, or to the works which they saw, in order to arrive at the knowledge of him? That this was not the case, I have formerly shown from a variety of circumstances; and, among others, from the testimony of scripture: “Male and female created he them; and God blessed them, and God
 “SAID unto them, be fruitful, and multiply||, &c. And
 “the Lord God commanded the man, SAYING, of every
 “tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat§.” From several other passages, it evidently appears, that God frequently conversed with the first man, and with his family. Adam, then, immediately after he was created, heard God speaking to him: it was thus that he attained to the knowledge of God: and thus he understood that he himself, and all the works which his eyes beheld, were the works of God: thus he understood the language, if we may so speak, of the heavens, of the earth, and of providence, publishing the power and Godhead of their great author.

In the same manner, all men, from that day to this, have acquired any knowledge they have had of God, they

* Mark x. 6. † xiii. 19. ‡ 2 Peter iii. 4. || Gen. i. 17. § ii. 26.

have first heard him, or heard of him, and then the creatures around became their daily instructors.

“Are clearly seen, being understood,” or meditated, or thought upon, in the order, and by the means which I have mentioned.

“By the things that are made.” The same word, in the singular, in Eph. ii. 10. is rendered workmanship: “We are his workmanship.” There he speaks of the spiritual creation, or renovation of the saints; but, in the passage which we are explaining, he has in his view the works of creation, and, probably, those of providence also.

It may only be further noticed, that the word rendered, “things that are made,” should, probably, be connected, not with the word, “understood,” but with that translated, “clearly seen.” Thus, the invisible things of him, *i. e.* his eternal power and Godhead, from the creation of the world, being thought, meditated upon, or understood, “are clearly seen by the things that are made.”

The meaning of the words, properly construed, appears to be as follows: “The invisible things of him, *i. e.* his eternal power and Godhead, ever since the world was created, thought, or meditated upon, or understood, first, by means of revelation, or tradition, are then clearly seen by the works of creation and providence.”

The next passage which I shall mention, is*, “When the Gentiles which have not the law, do, by nature, the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.”

“As many as have sinned without law, *i. e.* the writ-

* Rom. ii. 14.

“ ten law, such as the Gentiles, shall also perish without
 “ law; and, as many as have sinned in the law, *i. e.* the
 “ written law, such as the Jews, shall be judged by the
 “ law; for not the hearers of the law are just before God,
 “ but the doers of the law shall be justified* ;” *i. e.* were
 men to be justified by the law, it is not the hearing, or
 knowledge of the law, but perfect obedience to it, that
 will answer the purpose.

“ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law,
 “ the written law of Moses, do, by nature, the things
 “ contained in the law,” &c. It is to be observed,
 that the Gentiles are not here mentioned, as men who o-
 beyed the law, and who were therefore justified by their
 obedience; but as men who had a law, though not the
 written one, which law they all transgressed. “ We have
 “ before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are
 “ all under sin†.”

“ Do, by nature, the things contained in the law.”
 What were the things contained in the law, which they
 did?

1. In their laws, we find many things agreeable to
 the moral law, and many which that law expressly con-
 demns.

2. From their own history, we observe, that some of
 them did many actions, seemingly virtuous, or material-
 ly good; but, as they changed the truth of God into a
 lie, love to God, which is the soul of virtuous actions,
 was not the principle of theirs; therefore their works
 and characters, compared with the law, were, as a body
 without the soul, dead. From their history, we also learn,

* Rom. ii. 12.

† iii. 9.

that all of them, even as to their outward conduct, came short of obedience in very material points.

3. With this account agrees the sacred history. In order to see this in a striking point of view, among other passages, read Rom. i. 28. to the end; “And even as they
“did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God
“gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things
“which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder,” and so on. It is evident, then, by what they did and said, that they knew the law in a certain measure; and it is as evident, that, though they knew, they transgressed it. This the Apostle had undertaken to prove.

But it is said, that, “by nature,” they did these things. How they attained to the knowledge of these things, and how they are said to have done them by nature, I shall endeavour to shew.

1. When they heard, from generation to generation, that there was a God, and daily saw his works giving testimony to that truth; when they heard that such or such things were agreeable to God, and others objects of his aversion; that some things were fit, commendable, and profitable, others improper, shameful, and hurtful; having natures so constituted as to receive impressions from such information, which information, God, in his providence, communicated, in some degree, to all mankind, they would be disposed, in general, to do such or such actions, as right and praise-worthy, and to forbear others, as wrong and blameable; for, as to every particular branch of duty, however much they knew or approved of, we find that they did not fulfil them.

By means of instruction, their reason would be awa-

kened, and have materials to work upon, which it had not before; and reason, thus excited, and by means of instruction and observation, gradually improved, and the moral sense connected with it, would point out, or suggest to a man, before-hand, this part of conduct as pious and just, and that as impious and unjust; and conscience, whose province it is, to judge of actions done, or just performing, would, naturally, according to the light which a man had, and according as his conduct was agreeable to, or inconsistent with it, applaud or condemn him.

But how can they be said to do these things by nature? According to the primary sense of the word natural, the first state of mankind, might, perhaps, be called their natural state. In a secondary sense in which the scriptures make use of that word, their state of sin is called their natural state, because, ever since the fall, men are born in that condition; “and were all, by nature, children of “wrath, even as others*.”

Again, the custom which has prevailed in a place, seems to be called nature; and a deviation from that custom, an opposition to nature. “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him†.” These few observations will, perhaps, help us to explain the passage before us, when it is said, “that the Gentiles do, by nature, the things contained “in the law.”

We are not to conclude, that they were self-taught, or like infants, exposed in a wilderness, excluded from all human converse; and that, in that state, the knowledge of right and wrong, and a disposition to the one, and an

* Eph. ii. 3. See Rom. xi. 24.

† 1 Cor. xi. 14.

aversion to the other, sprung up in them, spontaneously, as heath in the desert. I have already shewn, that their condition was very different.

All men are said to be children of wrath by nature, because, though their first state was a state of innocence, since Adam sinned, all have sinned.

Nature is appealed to, as teaching men not to wear long hair, a practice in Corinth, whatever it was, which seems to have crept in contrary to custom. In like manner, the Gentiles, who did some things which the law required, are said to have done them by nature, because all along, from father to son, they had been informed of these things, and by means of that instruction, and their own observation, disposed, and accustomed, in some measure, to do them.

“ These having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.” What was said on the preceding article, may serve for the illustration of this; the office of the law, is, to command and forbid, to judge, to acquit the obedient, and condemn transgressors. Now, tradition, or instruction, in the first place; then the works of creation and providence; and, by these means, reason, the moral sense, and conscience, would take such hold of the hearts of the Gentiles, that they would become, as it were, a law to themselves, judging, acquitting, or condemning themselves, as they thought they deserved; therefore, as the law of Moses was engraved upon stone, they shewed that the law was so written in their hearts, that it could never, in any age, or nation, be totally effaced.

S E C T. II.

IF God has thus made known to mankind, in every age, his being and perfections, by means of revelation and tradition, in the first place, as I have endeavoured, in the preceding sections, to prove, it may easily be supposed, that that method of instruction would be as satisfying, as much fitted to convince, to quiet, and secure the mind from doubt and scepticism, nay more, than any other which men have devised, and which has so long obtained the vogue.

This I hope to make appear in this section.

From tradition, oral or written, we derive the greatest part of our knowledge. How do we know any thing of former ages, of the characters of men, and of nations, or of the times in which events past have happened? By tradition. How do many of us know, that there are such kingdoms as Russia, or France, or that there are such cities, as Constantinople, Paris, or London, or that there is such a personage as George III. King of Great Britain? By information. Was our knowledge confined to the truths, which we ourselves have discovered, or to the places or things, which we have actually visited, or seen, how limited would it be? We would be, as the Egyptian priest said to Solon concerning the Greeks, children indeed. It is evidently then the intention of Providence, that mankind should depend, in a great measure, upon tradition, for instruction and for happiness. We have seen, that there is such a thing as tradition; and human nature is adapted to that mode of information; or, in other words, the nature of man is so constituted, that he is disposed to believe the testimony of others, and thus to become acquainted with truths of

vast importance to him, which otherwise he never would have known. Accordingly, they who have heard of Sir Isaac Newton, and of Joseph Addison, Esq; celebrated writers, each in his kind, as readily believe that there were such men, and that they were the authors of the works which bear their names, as they believe that the sun shines when they see the light of it, or that they themselves exist.

It may be said, that mankind are much depraved; that there are many forgeries; and that men are thus liable to dangerous impositions: but, though there are many instances of falsehoods, and men have been deceived by them, they cannot alter the constitution or laws of nature. Although men are sometimes deceived, they do not, they cannot, for that reason, cease, in all cases, to believe; or should they endeavour to believe nothing but what they see with their eyes, this would be a violation of nature, and as evident a subversion of it, as if a man would not walk, because he could not walk upon his head, or not speak, because he could not speak with his ears: hence, mankind would reckon him a fool, or disordered in his senses, or worse, who would believe no testimony, because he had once detected a falsehood; or no writings, because he had discovered one or two forged, or who, for fear of imposition, would not believe that there is such a city as Jerusalem, unless he had seen it, nor that he is the son of such a mother, unless he had some other method, besides the report of others, to ascertain that fact.

Besides, could he prevail with himself to reject all testimony, where shall he stop, or find any truth upon which his mind may rest? May not the same unnatural turn of mind, which led him to reject the evidence of testimony, suggest to, or even persuade him, that what he sees,

and what he feels, are mere illusions, and that all is uncertainty and confusion?

Thus, having violated one law of his nature, he is naturally led to transgress them all, the consequence or punishment of which, is, that his mind is set adrift; involved in an abyss of horrible darkness, his life becomes a burden, and his existence worse than nothing. See Dr Beattie's excellent work on the immutability of truth.

It may be further noticed, that this disposition in mankind, so natural, and so universal, to believe testimony, or tradition, was designed not merely for the common purposes of human life, though that end, indeed, is an evident mark of beneficence and wisdom, which merits our admiration and praise; but also, in a special manner, for the more noble purpose of man's real happiness both in this life, and in the next, and by this means for the honour of God. "Without faith it is impossible to please God; faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Having thus shewn, that a disposition to believe testimony, is an essential part of the human constitution, we shall apply this reasoning to the subject of which we are treating. Let us suppose, which was no doubt the case, that Adam and Eve informed their sons Cain and Abel, that there was a God; that they heard him speaking to them; that he created all things, and preserves them; and that he enjoined them certain duties, which they daily performed; the children would naturally believe this testimony, and, in some measure, act accordingly: thus, we find each of them bringing his offering to God, as a testimony of their homage and respect: and these offerings were such as reason could never have dictated; and, therefore, they

were evidently the effect of tradition believed, or of the education which they had received. And this has been the case, from that down to the present time; a father, or some one for him, tells his children, that there is a God, the Creator and upholder of all things; that some things he requires, and others he forbids; they believe his report; and, as they grow up, and understand more distinctly the terms of his information, their belief becomes more firm and stable, and they worship as they have seen their father worship.

And it is worthy of remark, that many of the lower class of men, whose process of reasoning on points of religion is very simple and short, and such, as it is the result of information, believe at least as firmly, have as few doubts concerning religion, and its doctrines, and act as agreeably to its precepts, as many of the same principles by profession, of a much more liberal education, who profess to be great adepts in reasoning, and capable of deep researches.

Again, there is another principle in man, to which tradition is adapted; a principle which is quickened, and called forth into exercise by instruction; I mean, a principle of devotion, or of regard of some kind or other to the supreme Being; that this principle is natural to mankind, (and it operates first by means of information) appears from its universal influence; for all men are disposed to entertain a religion of some sort: hence Cicero observes*, “This seems to be a very strong argument for

* Porro, firmissimum hoc affirmari videtur, cur Deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit deorum opinio.

“ our belief that there are gods; that there is no nation so
 “ barbarous, none of mankind so savage, whose mind has
 “ not been impressed with the belief that there are
 “ gods.”

In the next place, man being thus instructed with regard to God, and his works, his reason would naturally acquiesce in the information; upon viewing the works of creation, he must, as he has heard, conclude, and be convinced, that so great an effect must have had a glorious cause: that since God was able to create and preserve the world, and make all its parts answer such wise and beneficent ends, he must be powerful, wise, and good: that since his providence superintends all things, and at all times, he must be infinite in knowledge, and present every where; that since he gives rain and fruitful seasons, sends good and evil, health and sickness, and death, he must be, as his word represents him, just as well as good; the enemy and avenger of vice, and the friend of virtue.

Thus tradition, and the works of creation and providence, unite in testifying concerning God, and his perfections; and man is constituted by nature, to believe, to approve, to acquiesce in, and feel that evidence, and to entertain some kind of regard to God, to love and revere, or to dread his sacred name.

This evidence then set before all men, so disposed, must make an impression, which appears to me quite indelible; and as there never was, perhaps, a man found in his senses, who felt not, some time or other, such an impression, for God never left himself without a witness; if any man, or number of men, have worn off that impression, it must have cost them many an unnatural effort; and what is the effect? they must be considered as

very singular beings, exceptions from the rest of mankind, monsters in human form.

The doctrine, then, which I have endeavoured to establish, has no hurtful tendency with regard to religion or morals; it is founded upon the plan which Providence has adopted, and is, as might naturally be supposed, friendly to religion, and to mankind, fitted to enforce the one, and to promote the happiness of the other.

C O N C L U S I O N.

1. SINCE man could not have attained to the knowledge of God, nor of many things necessary for his preservation, unless God had given an external revelation of himself, and of the things requisite for man, uninformed, to know; and since all men have some knowledge of a supreme Being, which must have been derived from such a revelation, I conclude, that, among others, this is a strong argument to convince us, that the Bible, of which that revelation, or these revelations, are a part, is the word of God.

Let the reader consider what passes in the world around him; let him trace back as far as human records can carry him, and what will he discover? That one generation of men, has been taught by another; that Providence has so ordered, that even the heathen, who were under strong temptations to have concealed this truth, confess, that what knowledge they had of God and of religion, was communicated to them by tradition: let him consider that the first man must have been taught by God himself; and that without such a cause, there never would have been such an effect; let him then peruse the history of

Moses, the most antient of all histories, part of which relates to facts much more antient than itself; and let him read of the first revelation of God to man, and of the many subsequent discoveries which he made of himself; then, like a man who travels from the mouth of a long river, in search of its spring, he will cry out, I have found it! the source of all knowledge with regard to God and man's duty; and be fully convinced, that the history of Moses, and all the other parts of the holy scriptures, so necessarily connected with it, are of divine authority.

2. The plan of deism is an imaginary fabric, without the least foundation; the writers of that class, and their disciples, who neither by the influence nor for the honour of common sense, are become so numerous, pretend, that reason alone, without any external revelation, is sufficient to teach them every thing requisite for their present, and their future happiness; and, therefore, since reason is sufficient, and God does nothing in vain, he never gave any external revelation of himself, nor of his will to mankind: a man of tolerable capacity, having access to all of their writings, might, from these, and the conversations of their followers, upon religious and moral subjects, compose a pretty, modish system, much to their credit who afford the materials.

They may call their system rational; but it never had, and never can have the sanction of sober reason; some of them represent mankind, (and their opinion is generally adopted by all the party) as under the rigid influence of fate, or determined by unavoidable necessity, in all they do; that, of course, their feelings of liberty are deceitful, an imposition, and, therefore, not to be depended on; and that what poor deluded men call sins, God considers as errors only.

Here, a character is ascribed to God, which, among men, would be detested, viz. that of a deceiver, as if he imposed upon them by feelings of liberty, and of remorse, when they think they have done amiss; whereas he really intends no such thing; he must, of course, be considered as the author of, nay, that there is no such thing as mortals call *sin*; that what the scriptures, and providence, and right reason, and the feelings of mankind testify, God hates, and must eternally hate; he considers only as laughable, venial, innocent errors.

Besides, the author I have particularly in my view, overthrows his own, and, if it was possible, every other system, by his doctrine of deceitful feelings; for, if one sense or feeling, viz. our feeling of liberty is deceitful, by what means shall we know, that all the rest are not so too? how shall we know that there is a God, such creatures as men, such things as virtue and vice? Such is the dark, comfortless system which obtains among many, how far it is founded on reason or sense, every man, learned, or unlearned, may easily judge.

Another of these writers represents the want of chastity in women past child-bearing, as no great crime, if any crime at all*.

* The long and helpless infancy of man, requires the combination of parents for the subsistence of their young, and that combination requires the virtue of chastity, or fidelity to the marriage-bed; without such an utility, it will readily be owned, that such a virtue would never have been thought of.—These rules have a reference to generation; and yet women past child-bearing are no more supposed to be exempted from them, than those in the flower of their youth and beauty. General rules are often extended beyond the principle whence they first arise. Essays by DAVID HUME, Esq; Vol. II. page 275. The same author classes, among the virtues of the lower

Having given a sample of deceitful reasoning on religious and moral topics, we shall return from this digression. They say, that reason, without revelation, is sufficient to teach them every thing necessary for them to know: but have they in no instance been indebted to revelation? have they never read any books composed by Christians, by which they have acquired the knowledge of facts, of which they were ignorant before, and by which their reasoning faculties have been improved in some degree? If they have, as these writers admire, and have thankfully received information from the gospel, they must also have been profited by it.

Again, that each of them had a father and mother, cannot be doubted; and that they, or tutors substituted in their place, communicated to them the first impressions they had of religion and morals, and the first principles

order, *broad shoulders, a lank belly, firm joints, taper legs*; and quotes Diodorus Siculus, Lib. XV. as an authority for his opinion. "In Epaminondas all the virtues are found united; force of body, eloquence of expression," &c. page 315. Having enumerated many kinds of virtue, and endeavoured to shew, that they consist in being useful or agreeable to the person himself, or to others, he adds, "I must confess, that this enumeration puts the matter in so strong a light, that I cannot, at PRESENT, be more assured of any truth, which I learn from reasoning and argument, than that personal merit consists entirely in the usefulness or agreeableness of qualities to the person himself, or to others who have any intercourse with him," page 351. But, however much assured he is in one page, in the next he becomes a sceptic: "But, when I reflect, that the bulk and figure of the earth have been measured and delineated, &c. yet men still dispute concerning the foundation of their moral duties; when I reflect on this, I say, I fall back into diffidence and scepticism, and suspect, that an hypothesis, so obvious, had it been true, would long ere now, have been received by the unanimous suffrage, and consent of mankind," page 352.

of reason, we shall take for granted. Now, these parents, or these teachers, intrusted with their childrens education, have, for many ages past, been professors of Christianity, and indebted to it for the most material parts of their knowledge; and so, of course, must their descendants or pupils of the present generation be under the highest obligations to it.

Or, for argument's sake, let us suppose, that they are lineally descended from heathens, who never professed Christianity, nor read the holy scriptures; was not every race of these instructed by the preceding one? and do not some of the most intelligent and antient writers among them, who were lights in their generation, declare, that their knowledge of God, and of religion, was communicated to them by tradition? and these traditions, I have shown, had for their origin, revelation, or the word of God. In whatever point of view we consider this subject, it is evident, that unbelievers, of all ranks, are indebted, for their knowledge, such as it is, of religious and moral truths, to the gospel of Christ.

If then the man is ungrateful, who hides or denies his obligations, and pretends that he stood in no need, or derived from himself, what his benefactor really bestowed; professed unbelievers or the enemies of Christianity, must be equally ungrateful; ungrateful to God who hath taught them in such a manner, and ungrateful to men, the means, in his hand, of their instruction.

If that son is unnatural, who attempts to wound or stab the mother that bare him, the men we speak of must be equally unnatural, because, though they derived their knowledge from Christianity, they turn the edge of it against Christianity, and endeavour, by all means, to overthrow it; but, thanks to God, the foundation stand-

eth sure. Many dogs bark at the moon, but she continues, nevertheless, steadily, to run her course.

They are, besides, cruel to their fellow men; should a set of men steal your son's money, should they rob him of his property, and take away his life into the bargain, they would surely be considered as unjust, and enemies to society; but your son, although reduced to poverty, may reap benefit by it; though he be deprived of life, death may turn out to be gain to him: but, should a number of men, by ridicule, by sly insinuations, or specious objections against the truth of the gospel, should they, by writings deliberately composed, and industriously disseminated every where, with a view to bring Christianity into disrepute, beget in your son's mind doubts concerning the word of God, and, by degrees, alienate his heart from it, how dismal must be his condition! and yours, if you have the feelings of a father, on his account! he is involved in mazes of uncertainty, and a state of doubt and uncertainty is next to a state of damnation; his hope, with regard to futurity, is cut off by his unbelief; and what is a man without hope, hope, the joy of youth, and the nurse of old age! and what words can paint the guilt of those who rob their fellow men of such a blessing, and who plunge them into the depths of scepticism, these toils of Satan, from which few of them ever escape?

3. I thank God, who from time to time has raised up men, who, with learning, with zeal and dignity becoming their profession, have stood forth in the defence of the gospel; who, by a variety of arguments taken from the miracles and prophecies recorded in scripture, from the evidence of testimony, from analogy, from the harmony visible through the several parts of the Bible, and from the suitableness of that plan to the state of our minds, their

wants, their depravity and wretchedness, have put their adversaries to shame, if, indeed, they were susceptible of that feeling, or had the discretion, shall I call it, never to retail objections which have again and again been repeated, and as often unanswerably refuted.

At the same time, I must sincerely regret, that they have made so many needless concessions, and yielded, without any necessity, advantages to their adversaries, of which they have had the sagacity to avail themselves. Say the enemies of Christianity, "The light of nature teaches all men that there is a God, one God; that he is powerful, wise, and good; that there is a providence; that the soul is immortal; that men ought to be pious, just, and sober; and that they should do to others as they would reasonably wish others would do to them." These things the defenders of Christianity generally grant. Thus they are confined to narrow ground, and obliged to defend themselves under many disadvantages. Tho' nature, say they, teaches so many truths, there are some which it could never discover, viz. that there are three persons in the Godhead; that Christ was to come and suffer so much for us, and the like. Sometimes they defend their principles in this manner: Nature teaches many important truths; but God has given us, in the gospel, a re-publication of these, together with some others, which otherwise we could not have known, in a manner the most clear, and the least subject to alteration.

As the friends of the gospel go so far with, and shew such needless complaisance to its enemies, they must, in good manners, in some shape, return the compliment; and this they do, by bestowing on the gospel some encomiums, viz. that it contains a most excellent system of mo-

rals, and is fitted, in so far, to do good to society: but, gentlemen, as for your mysteries, our REASON, which is in the place of God to us, cannot comprehend them; therefore it bids us reject them and, with regard to your twofold revelation of the same things, by nature, and by the gospel, our REASON tells us, that it is not the way of God, to do his work by halves, or to do any thing so imperfectly, as to stand in need of amendment. Thus, like Judas, they kiss, in order to betray. And it is to be seriously considered, whether these improper, unnecessary, and groundless concessions, have not contributed as much, or more than any other circumstance, to harden unbelievers in their opposition to the gospel.

Whereas, had the friends of Christianity denied the first principles of their opponents, and called upon them to shew, which they ought to have done, but could not, that these truths are self-evident, or that they were discovered by reason, and by it only; or had the friends of Christianity shewn, which they might have done, that the knowledge of God, which its enemies ascribe to reason, was derived from revelation; and that the weapons by which they attempt to overthrow Christianity, they have drawn from Christianity. Thus, the very foundation of that tower, by which they proposed to have reached to heaven, would have been entirely sapped, and the boasted superstructure overturned.

4. That there is such a thing as natural religion, is, for the most part, taken for granted; and many volumes have been writ on that subject: if, by natural religion, they mean that men are naturally disposed to receive certain impressions of God, and of their duty; that such impressions, every where made among men, have been occasioned, first by tradition, or external revelation, and

encouraged, and maintained by the works of creation and providence, daily observed, and their influence felt, there would be no room for dispute.

But, as this is not their meaning, as they maintain that reason, by means of the works of nature, without any external revelation, may discover, and has discovered, that there is a God, of such and such perfections, and, in a word, a system of religion, in a great measure, complete without the gospel, and independent of it; that there ever was such a religion, or can be, I must, for the many reasons formerly adduced, entirely deny: and if the religion commonly called natural, took its rise from tradition or revelation, not from reason unaided by tradition, as I have, I hope, already proved, is it not fit, whatever be the consequence, to affirm, and hold by this as a truth?

But, if we attend to the consequences, it will be found, that the opinion generally held concerning natural religion, is hurtful to the influence of the gospel, and therefore to the interests of mankind, but that the other opinion is favourable to both. A man trained with high notions of natural religion, or of his own reason, and of its discoveries, is little concerned, or not so much as another of a different persuasion, whether the gospel be true or not; whether it prove successful in the world, or be rejected by mankind, because he has a system of his own, founded upon the eternal reason and unchangeable nature of things, which will, in a great measure, or, perhaps, entirely answer his purpose, without Christianity. All the doctrines revealed in the word of God must be tried by his pre-conceived notions, or the supposed natural dictates of his reason; and, if they agree not with these, they must be new-modelled, explained away, and

laid aside. Accordingly, we find, that many of these doctrines, which are all of high importance, are treated by many professing Christians, teachers, and their disciples, as unnecessary, nay, unreasonable and absurd, and therefore rejected.

Whereas the man, who feels, and is sensible of his obligations to the gospel, as the only source of his religious knowledge, sensible of his dependence, reads the word of God, as the instructor and model of his reason: he reads for information, and when, by comparing passages with one another, he discovers their meaning; he believes with readiness and humility, because he considers them as a revelation of the nature, of the perfections and will of God to him, though he does not perfectly comprehend the truths thus revealed.

For the sake of illustration, let us suppose that a great monarch, in some quarter of the earth, unknown to us, sends a writing, addressed to a number of men in Great Britain, in which he engages to bestow upon them, in some after period, a great treasure, requiring them to believe certain articles which he mentions concerning the complexion and stature of the men, the form of government, and the fruits of that country, of which they had no previous knowledge, and to perform certain duties; without the belief of which articles, and the performance of which duties, they are, by no means, to expect the treasure which he has promised, which would greatly enrich them; they know, we shall suppose, that this writing is an expression of that monarch's will, either written by his own hand, or by another's under his inspection, and that they are all extremely fond of the treasure promised.

The question among them now comes to be, how shall

we understand his will concerning the articles to be believed, and the actions to be performed, that we may not, by our misapprehensions, disobey him, and forfeit his promise? Here severals step forth, and declare their mode of explication: we have, say they, a faculty which we call reason, the sovereign judge of all things in heaven, much more of all things upon earth, let us bring the contents of that paper to this test; if they endure the trial, it is well; if not, we must bring them down to our own standard, otherwise we must be unbelievers.

But what is here! men of such complexion and stature, a government of such a form, and trees and plants bearing such fruits! we never saw such things; we know nothing of them: therefore, however explicit these articles are, and how often soever repeated through the record, we cannot understand, nor believe them, in their obvious, natural meaning, our reason will not allow us: that government, these men and plants, must be precisely such as we have among ourselves; they must, for there can be nothing in the world different from what we daily see, and know, and are thoroughly acquainted with.

The rest reply, ye boast much of, and make a great parade with your REASON; but, in the present case, ye have shown yourselves to be more ignorant than children, and void of common sense. Is it not evident, that we know nothing of that prince, of his country, or of his will, except by this writing alone? Had we known every thing which he has revealed, before he revealed it, common sense declares, that it would have been needless to have sent us this record: therefore it is, by comparing the several parts of the writing together, and by that way only, that we can understand what his will is; and if,

by this means, we can discover his meaning, we must believe him, though we understand not perfectly the nature of the things of which he speaks, and we must act accordingly. Now, which of these two sets of men reason most justly, and act most agreeably to the principles of common sense? The last surely; the application is obvious.

5. According to the mode of our education, by preposterously ranking natural religion or reason first in order, and the word of God in the second place, we are naturally led to depend much on the first; and the more we ascribe to natural religion, or to reason, by which it is attained, we, unhappily, detract so much from the gospel. What I am to say on the following subjects, shall be expressed with much diffidence, and due deference to men of superior judgment.

1st, With regard to moral philosophy; does the science of morals respect our external actions only? does it not extend to the heart, to its dispositions and principles? and is it not its province, to point out the most powerful motives to virtuous actions? what are these actions, these principles, and motives? are we to hammer the knowledge of these out of our own heads? perhaps not; this knowledge is derived some how by information from without; accordingly we are directed to a long list of venerable antients, to Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Arrian's Epictetus, Cicero, Seneca, &c. all of them much to be valued on many accounts; but are we to swallow, implicitly, every thing they say, on the subject of morals? or are they the standard by which we may, infallibly, judge of our actions, whether they be moral, or defective and immoral? or, if the principles of their knowledge, which they have dressed up, and reduced into form, were de-

rived from another quarter, would there be any impropriety, in having recourse, now and then, to the original, I mean, to the word of God?

Does moral philosophy respect our conduct toward our fellow men, and ourselves only, without any special regard to our behaviour toward God? by whose authority was the system of morals thus limited? upon what foundation in nature is such an idea of that science established? Can a man behave in a manner strictly moral toward his neighbour, while he pays no regard to God? can a mason raise a baseless fabric of stone in the air? or can a gardener make a branch produce plenty of good fruit, when the root, and all the other parts of the tree are entirely dead?

Can a man be said to be just, in the extensive sense of the word, while God, the great head of society, is not regarded, or left out of his plan? If men cannot behave dutifully to their neighbours or themselves, unless they have a devout regard to God, how can they behave dutifully to him, without the knowledge of him, and of his will? how is this knowledge to be acquired? will even the divine Plato instruct them sufficiently on this head? If regard is to be had to God in the study and practice of morals, his will, made known to all men, must be the great standard of moral conduct, the infallible rule by which men are to judge of their dispositions and of their actions: that will or law is expressed, in brief, in Exod. xx chapter. Would it be unfit, unseemly, unhandsome, or inconsistent with the profession of a moral philosopher, or an unpardonable incroachment on the province of the theologian, should he either chuse for his text the moral law, contained in the

Bible, or, at least, make frequent references to that sacred book?

Will not young men, if accustomed, during the course of their education, to put an high value on the word of God, and to have their minds formed under its influence, be readily disposed, when they enter into the world, to act their part well, whether in church or state? or to listen to its reproofs, and receive effectual checks from it when they have done amiss?

Or if, during their education, especially during their study of moral philosophy, they have been accustomed to overlook the sacred scriptures, to substitute in their place, and to admire something of infinitely less importance, some cobweb-theory of morals, may they not, are they not, by the manner of their education, fitted, as it were, industriously, to be an easy prey to scepticism? may they not readily plunge into the gulph of infidelity, and thus become a burden to themselves, and a pest to society? These queries I leave, with great respect, to the serious consideration of those who profess to be thoroughly acquainted with this subject.

2dly, As to theology; is it proper for young men to lay entirely aside, or, in a great measure, to neglect the sacred scriptures, ^{and} in order to study natural religion, as the foundation of Christianity, to betake themselves to heathen writers, whether Greek or Latin? are there not many things in them which the gospel condemns? Perhaps you will compare these with, and correct them by the doctrines and precepts of Christianity; but why prefer them, in any measure, or for any time, to that, which, in your own opinion, is the standard? why overlook the word of God on their account, when, from it, they have

received, either mediately or immediately, the best things they have written on the subject of religion or morals?

A man having his mind stored with the notions of the Academics, or his heart tinctured with the pride of the Stoics, is ill prepared to believe, with humility, the doctrines of the gospel, or to submit, with reverence, to its holy precepts. Origen, that great genius in the primitive church, and many others educated in the same school with him, may be a sufficient warning to succeeding ages, not to mix philosophy with Christianity, nor to attempt to explain the doctrines of the gospel, by the notions of Plato, or of any other philosopher, however celebrated.

A man acquainted with the truth, a man of erudition and discernment, will be in no hazard of disgracing the pulpit, by quotations from Plato or Seneca, in proof, or for illustration of what he says, insinuating by this practice, if his hearers understand his insinuations, that there are many defects in the gospel, and, therefore, that such supplements, in the judgment of their teacher, are quite necessary: nor will he be under any temptation to make a comparison between Socrates, the father of scepticism, and our Saviour, the Son of God; nor between Seneca, who died by his own hand, and the great Apostle of the Gentiles, as if they resembled, in any degree, one another.

In the last place; ye are unspeakably happy, who receive the sacred scriptures as the word of God; who, by means of science, falsely so called, are not plagued with doubts concerning their truth or authenticity; who firmly believe the gospel, and whose hearts and lives are gradually formed, under the influence of its doctrines and of its precepts. Though your conditions in life may put it out of your power to study many languages, or read

many books, how thankful should ye be, that ye have easy access to that book, in your own language, from which the principles of all knowledge have been communicated to all mankind? ye have that revelation of God's will, to which the learned, after many researches for truth and happiness, are glad to return, if indeed they return, much fatigued, disappointed, and often wounded, as the sure ground of their hope, and as a resting place to their souls.

There ye have the most antient, the most entertaining, the most interesting, and instructive, of all histories, the history of the creation, and of mankind in their innocent and in their fallen state, and of the conduct of Providence towards them; the most grand, the most sublime and affecting descriptions; characters of every kind drawn with a fidelity and exactness no where else to be met with, that ye may, without trouble or expence, without waiting for instruction by experience, learn to imitate the good, to shun the path, and escape the miseries of the bad; there ye have the most comfortable doctrines, perfectly fitted, by infinite wisdom and mercy, to your condition, that ye might be delivered from the fear of the past, that ye might enjoy that peace of which your minds are so desirous, that ye might be filled with hope and confidence, and serve God without fear.

There ye find the most awful threatenings, and the most encouraging promises, calculated to alarm your fears, to inspire you with hope, to lead you to the refuge of your souls, and engage you in his service.

There the law of God shines forth very extensive, and very pure, holy, just, and good: that, by it, ye may examine your past, and regulate your future conduct.

“ Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you, in all
 “ wisdom; receive, with meekness, the ingrafted word,
 “ which is able to save your souls. But continue thou
 “ in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been
 “ assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them,
 “ and that from a child thou hast known the holy scrip-
 “ tures, which are able to make thee wise to salvation,
 “ through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scrip-
 “ ture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable
 “ for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruc-
 “ tion in righteousness, that the man of God may be
 “ perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”
 2 Tim. iii chapter.

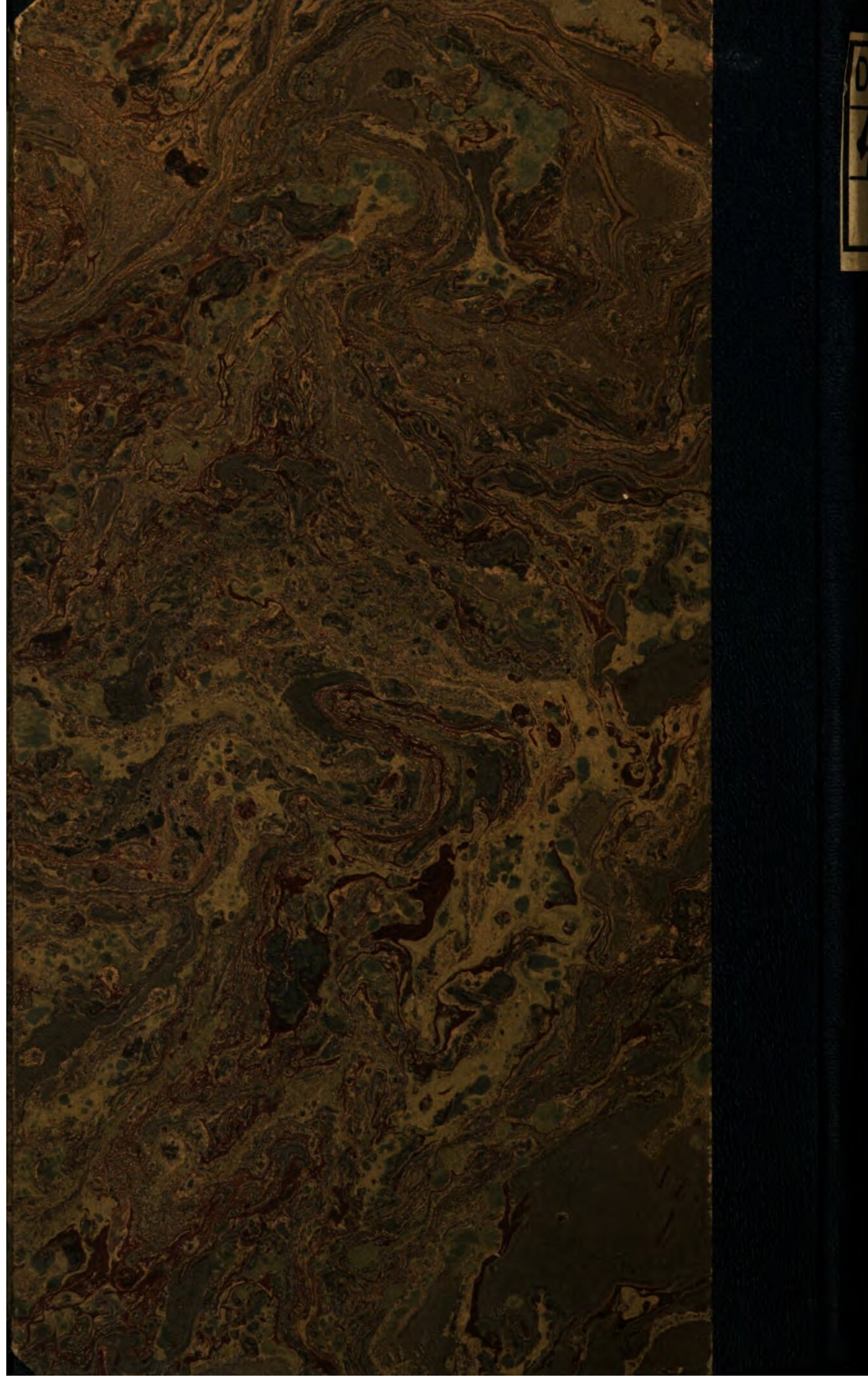
T H E E N D.

For the word of Christ dwell richly in you, in all
wisdom, and with all understanding, the inspired words
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be in the things which you have learned, and have been
instructed in, knowing of whom you have learned them,
and that from a child, and half-known the holy scriptures,
which are able to make you wise unto salvation.
All things which are written in the Christ Jesus. All things
are to be known by inspiration of God, and in particular
the scriptures, for the correction, for the instruction
in righteousness, that the man of God may be
perfect, and fully furnished unto all good works.

THE END

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WIS 64



An Attempt to shew that the Knowledge of God, has in all ages, been
derived from Revelation or Tradition, not from Nature

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